



Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, September 19, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

Contact

Phone: (903) 258-2547
Web Site: www.TylerTCF.org
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P.O. Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711

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Margie Newman, Mary Lingle

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TCF National Organization
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.
Meeting will begin with 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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School Starts

Strange things happen to you when your child dies. You'll fail if you try to make sense of most of it.

Both my children had finished high school when my son died, yet I found the beginning of school—especially that first year—to be difficult. The bus stops in front of my home for the neighborhood children. Suddenly, as they all gathered to wait for the bus, I found myself reliving those simpler, happier days of old; longing for them actually. It was a painful time.

Now, if I, whose children are grown and gone, had a problem with school starting, those of you who do have school age children must know that your pain is normal. It's another reminder that life goes on—with or without our children—and acknowledging that it hurts! I came to the conclusion that it was all right to pine for happier times and it was nothing to get upset about. As with many remnants of grief, I recognize it, allow it and then get on with my life.

Maybe you're like me, you'll always be a little nostalgic about school starting. That would probably have been true even if my son had lived. Maybe you, too?

Mary Cleckley ~ TCF, Stone Mountain, Georgia

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

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 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.”

Yellow Camaro

In the August, 2006 TCF newsletter, there was a story titled "The Old Yellow Truck." It was written by a bereaved father who told of the pain he experienced when selling his son's 1978 Toyota pick-up—the truck his son drove before his death. I couldn't help but shed some tears as I read it, for I know—we all know—how difficult it is to part with anything that belonged to our children.

Maybe it was the fact that he wrote about a yellow truck. Some of you may have heard the song on my CD, "Forever 16." The first line says, "A yellow Camaro, a little old but clean; pretty as a Porsche to a girl of 16." Stacey turned 16 on September 8, 1988. For her birthday, I bought her a 1985 yellow Camaro. I will never forget the day I gave her the keys. I wrapped them in a big box so she wouldn't know what they were. I can still see how happy she was when she realized that they were the keys to her car. I can feel her hugs and kisses. You would have thought I had just given her a new Porsche.

Her first car: a symbol of freedom, of growing up. One day I am watching her wash and polish it. A few days later I am going to pick it up in the school parking lot, which was one of the hardest moments after her death. I remember trying to get the key in the door lock—my hand shaking so hard that I could hardly do it. I remember sitting in the drivers seat. I could smell her. I could feel her all around me; her books in the seat along with countless other things that she considered important enough to keep with her—typical things that a 16-year-old girl would have.

I sat there for the longest time before starting the car and driving it home. That may have been the longest drive of my life. I parked it in its usual place in the driveway. I wondered what I would do with it. Like the man said in his story, "this is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go?" For me, I could not bear to look at it every day, so I sold it. Funny—I kept one set of keys.

I still have so many of Stacey's things: things that were worthless to anyone else but are priceless to me. I always will. Someone else will have to deal with them after I'm gone.

A few things I keep close to me: one of her favorite unicorns, her last school picture, a "pet rock" she made for me. There are days I feel like gathering all her things and just covering myself up with them—anything to feel closer to her. Every now and then I will see a yellow 1985 Camaro on the road and wonder if it hers, and the memories will flood my heart. Lord, I miss her.

Just like every one else who misses their child, I will just keep holding on to her memory and live with the hope of seeing her again someday. Thank God for the memories. Thank our Lord for the hope.

Dr. Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministry ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

**Carolyn ~ We love and miss you!
You are in our thoughts and prayers!**



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*

Love Gifts



Sherri Tutt in memory of Lisa Marie Tutt - refreshments for the August meeting

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell - use of a storage building

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler to use their facilities as our meeting place



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.

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

If you would like to have your child's photo included on the second memorial quilt, please mail a \$25 donation to P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711. For more information contact us at (903) 258-2547, or email us at info@TylerTCF.org.

Thanks to Teresa and David Terrell for donating their talent and time on this beautiful quilt which will be displayed in our meeting room and at future special events.



Announcements

We are still meeting at 707 W. Houston St. in Tyler, but we're now using the facilities at the back of the property.

Our Annual Candlelighting Ceremony will be held on Dec. 10th, 6:30 p.m. at Carpenter's Cross Baptist Church, Hwy. 344 and 155 S. Please contact Tina Loper at (903) 594-2132 or Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 for more information. The media is invited to attend. Please let us know if you would like to help this year in honor and in loving memory of your child.



If you would like a phone friend, please call Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 or Mary Lingle at (903) 581-4566.

We are accepting canned food at the meetings through November for the Lack's Christmas tree food drive.

Forgive Until Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is LOVE, if forgiveness is silent within us?

We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive God or the fate we see ruling the universe. We start to forgive friends and relatives for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness. Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died.

It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves, and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us all heed the quiet message heard so softly in that maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive...forgive...forgive until forever. Let love enfold our anguish, helping us to learn to grow and strive beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

Don Hackett ~ TCF, Hingham, Massachusetts



We need not walk alone.

"In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love." —Mother Theresa

September Birthdays



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



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



Jon Lee Hardwick
9-29-61 ~ 5-7-77
Brother of Vicki Johnson



Theresa Kay Talley
9-16-78 ~ 12-20-05
Daughter of W.A. & Ruby Talley



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



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



Michael R. Peymon
9-18-79 ~ 1-2-06
Daughter of Tom & Sharon
Peymon



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



Stacey Smith
9-8-72 ~ 10-4-88
Daughter of Sam Smith

Special THANKS to Sherri Tutt for copying and mailing our newsletter out each month!!!

Last Moments

Last moments
Snatches of conversation
That echo across all decades...
Priceless words
Indelibly etched on the heart.

Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken
But unexpected sentiment—
A quick embrace, a silly smirk,
Or joyous laughter—
Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.

We came too soon to understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which
Taken-for-granted event
Will become
A last moment.

Diane Fields ~ TCF, Westmoreland, PA



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



Douglas Johnson, Jr.
9-24-97 ~ 3-18-05
Son of Douglas & Shelley Johnson



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



Adam Thomas Pritchard
9-21-82 ~ 2-21-04
Son of
Thomas & Ginger Pritchard



We need not walk alone.

"Suppressed grief suffocates, it rages within the breast, and is forced to multiply its strength." —Ovid

September Anniversaries



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



Cindy Dingler
10-18-57 ~ 9-6-99
Daughter of Lynda Hanna



Stephanie Harris Reed
5-18-79 ~ 9-5-98
Daughter of Rick & Susan Harris



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



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



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



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



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

TCF Library Hours

Mon, Tue, Thur: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.
Wed: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Fri: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The Library is located in our meeting location, the College-Bound Solutions offices, at 707 W. Houston Street, Tyler.



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 Ask

Someone asked me about you today.

It's been so long since anyone has done that. It felt so good to talk about you, to share my memories of you, to simply say your name out loud.

She asked me if I minded talking about what happened to you—or would it be too painful to speak of it.

I told her I think of it every day and speaking about it helps me to release the tormented thoughts whirling around in my head.

She said she never realized the pain would last this long. She apologized for not asking sooner.

I told her, "Thanks for asking."

I don't know if it was curiosity or concern that made her ask, but told her, "Please do it again sometime—soon."

Barbara Taylor Hudson

In Our Circle

In our circle, we noticed that the temptation can exist for Christians to sugarcoat everything and act like bad things are really good things in disguise.

"Gifts come in all kinds of packages," someone said to me recently in reference to the painful things we face in life.

I don't think I will ever reach a place where I could consider [my son] Seth's death a "gift" any more than I consider rape or child abductions, terrorist attacks, murder, genocide, or famine "gifts."

While it is true that the strength or the insight we gain from God to get through these times could be considered as gifts, the event itself is not, and I believe that God grieves just as much as we do.

Why can't we just admit that painful things are painful?

Why can't we just sit down with people and cry along with them as we admit that what happened is cause for tears?

We don't need people to rush in and frantically try to wrap it all up pretty with a bow, like it is something we should savor.

In time, we may see goodness that seeped out of badness, but we should leave it to God to show us that, when our eyes are not so full of tears and we can see more clearly.

Elizabeth A. Price, in Helping the Bereaved: A Few Basic Rules, Bereavement Magazine



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

When a Couple is Hit with the “Worst Loss”

The following story was written by Scott Shibuya Brown, *L.A. Times* staff writer and appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, July 2, 1995.

Three years ago, death of the most wrongful sort claimed two victims in Joe and Donna's household (they asked that their real names not be used).

The first victim was the couple's 18-month-old daughter, Melanie, who died from a malignant brain tumor. The second was more unexpected: Joe and Donna's once strong, six-year marriage, which crumbled in the aftermath of their child's passing.

Both of them were lost in fear and grief,” says a psychologist who counseled Donna. “They were unable to sustain each other.”

Of all the tribulations that test the bonds of marriage, none is as overwhelming as the death of a child. Although there are no studies to correlate deaths with divorces, psychologists and other therapists say they are accustomed to seeing the events in tandem. A child's death, they say, invariably triggers a pathology in the surviving family, with many previously healthy unions succumbing under the weight of the tragedy.

“There is a significant rise in divorces in families whose children have died,” says Arthur Kovacs, a Santa Monica psychologist who treats patients suffering from grief. The husband and wife “cry out for comfort, and no one has any to give.”

Says one San Diego mother whose adolescent son died five years ago, “When you lose a child, your losses are just beginning.”

Nationally, about 65,000 children die every year, and there are several well-known groups—such as Parents of Murdered Children and The Compassionate Friends—that provide support and information for bereaved parents. The day of the Oklahoma bombing, members of local and regional chapters of Compassionate Friends arrived at the site to aid parents of the children lost in the building.

Ultimately, however, the burden of grief, blame and anger are borne by the mother and father, collectively as parents, but also as individuals. And that, therapists say, is where the secondary trauma begins. For no matter how strong the marriage might have been, the passage through the pain of losing a child is always a journey taken alone.

“Grief for a child doesn't conform to the other normal expectations of other griefs,” says Barbara Rosof, a San Diego psychotherapist and author of *The Worst Loss: How Families Heal From the Death of a Child* (Henry Holt & Co., 1994). “Even though a couple is married, there's a feeling that they are going through it alone. Each partner is wrapped up in their own grief.”

The time after a child's death means a lengthy spell of acute agony, Rosof says, a period of up to a year and a half, when “you walk around like you've been hit over the head with a baseball bat.”

Paradoxically, it is also a time often marked by intense isolation from one's spouse, despite the other partner being the only person sharing the experience and sharing a commensurate amount of pain. Such isolation bodes badly for any marriage, Rosof says, but is especially destructive during a time when spouses need to communicate with each other more than ever.

“Instead of being able to help and support your partner, you feel so empty and numb and devastated, you don't have much to give,” Rosof says. “People are so overwhelmed that they are not reflecting on the state of the marriage for a long time. The notion that tragedy brings people closer together is a lovely, wishful fantasy.”

Many factors can influence a marriage struggling in the aftermath of a child's death. Sometimes the child may have been the only element holding a shaky marriage together. In instances where one parent was responsible for the child at the time of the death, the chances of the marriage's enduring worsen as blame is added to the guilt. “Those are almost intolerable circumstances for a marriage,” Kovacs says.

Another factor that may affect the surviving parents is the nature of the child's death. Jeanne Murrone, a Charlotte, N.C. clinical psychologist, who works with grief related issues, says in situations in which children have died after a lengthy illness, parents have to have time to adjust to the impending loss. When the child's suffering has been especially great, death may also bring about a sense of relief.

But sudden deaths from accidents or tragedies like the Oklahoma City bombing, she says, are likely to be harder on parents who, in addition to being wholly unprepared for the child's death, suffer from the trauma of the event and from guilt for having placed the child in that situation.

“Can you imagine the guilt of the parents who put their children in that day care center?” Kovacs asks. “They will replay endlessly what they would have done differently.” One dissenting voice on the nature of grief, is Andrea Gambill, editor-in-chief of *Bereavement* magazine, a publication she calls “a support group in print.” Gambill, who lost her 17-year-old daughter, almost 20 years ago, says the notion that divorce follows death is “absolutely not true” and that in most cases losing a child “will strengthen a marriage...in the long run.”

“This is all based on the assumption that a child's death is a terrible stress on a marriage and therefore it will end up in divorce court,” says Gambill, who says the presumption that a child's death will trigger divorce is based only on anecdotal experience and not clinical data.

“The investment that each parent had in the child gives them a link they don't want to end,” she says. Similarly, in cases where one parent may have been in charge of the child at the time of death, Gambill's experience through the magazine has been that there “is not a lot of blaming.”

“If the blame exists, it is short-lived,” she says. “When two people love each other, they are very willing to understand how it could have been them in charge.”

Such understanding, however, is not likely to be forthcoming immediately after a child's death. Therapists recommend that following a loss, grieving parents should look outside their marriage to friends, religion, and family for support and respect the manner in which the other spouse grieves.

In many cases, one or both parents may find it difficult to discuss the child's death until months or years after the fact. One northern California woman, whose toddler drowned in a bathtub and who was divorced shortly afterward, says she and her husband could never bring themselves to really talk about their son's death. Decades later, both having remarried, they met each other in public and both broke down crying and were for the first time able to communicate their shared pain and loss.

Psychologists say, too, that while most parents learn how to cope with their loss, they rarely are ever able to forget it. Recently, Kovacs began counseling an 82-year-old woman who more than 50 years ago lost her 8-year-old son to leukemia. Although she separated from her husband, they later reconciled. The woman produced a faded photograph of her son, one she always carried in her wallet. “She wept as bitterly as if it had been yesterday,” Kovacs says.

“A death of a child goes on for the rest of your life,” Rosof says. “To the parents of a dead child, he grows up in their minds every day, like ‘today he would be starting the first grade,’ or ‘today, he'd be getting his driver's license. Twenty years after, parents will say, ‘I think about him every day.’”



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 following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

No thank you, I'd prefer to stop receiving 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)

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

P.O. Box 9714
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We need not walk alone.



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