



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

SOUTHWEST DALLAS COUNTY CHAPTER

The mission of 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.

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Angels Across the USA



Alan and Denise Pedersen brought their Angels Across the USA tour to our last meeting. Alan performed old favorites as well selections from his newest CD "Peace In The Mourning".

OUR CHILDREN, SIBLINGS AND GRANDCHILDREN REMEMBERED



BIRTHDAYS

Jacquilyn Sue DuMond granddaughter of Heather
Hope Jalynn Sandle daughter of Loretta
Valencia Hoy daughter of Gary
Jeff Jordan daughter of Brian&Tracy
Joseph Burke Neale son of John&Nancy
Bradley David Gilliland son of Rawley&Diane



ANNIVERSARIES

Lesley Michelle Campbell daughter of Bill stepdaughter of Joan
Marcus Thomas Jones son of Yvonne
Matthew Wayne Blake son of Rick&Deannie
Eric Stefon Byrdsong-Nelson son of Stephania
Edward Carlton Jones, III son of Edward&Pauletta
Brian Heath Sloss son of Linda



There is an Angel

The tears relieve the pressure, that's felt inside my head,
There are days when it is tough, just to get out of bed.

People complain about silly things, this only makes me mad,
And when I think of what we have lost, then I get really sad.

My heart aches for my loved one, I miss her smile so much,
If only I could hear her laugh, and feel her gentle touch.

She would have been a nurse you see, in pediatrics that year,
To help the children with their pain, and speed them toward a cure.

Now her smile warms our hearts, as we start each day,
We think of all she would have done, as we start to pray.

Asking God for help and strength, to carry on the fight,
Hoping to bring unto this world, a ray of soothing light.

But so many young ones leaving, we have to ask God why,
They belong with us here on Earth, not with Him up in the sky!

Then I look around this world, and don't like what I see,
Too many people thinking of themselves, instead of saying we!

So in our baby's memory, we'll try our best each day,
Knowing there is an Angel, to guide us on our way.

-September 3, 2003
-Dan Bryl

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:

**TCF Southwest Dallas
P.O. Box 380011
Duncanville Texas 75138**

Death Ended Your Child's Life, But Not His or Her Relationship to the Family

Dr. Nancy Hogan, RN, PhD

In 1983, I wrote a two-part article for the [National TCF] Newsletter called "Commitment to Survival" in which I described parent bereavement as a complex process that includes mothers and fathers maintaining a relationship with their dead child. Specifically, I wrote: "Death ended your child's life but not his or her relationship to the family" and "You give up the old person who was physically connected to a now deceased child and make different connections with your child who has died."

I received many letters describing how bereaved parents had been criticized and even ridiculed by others for expressing their continuing love and connection to their dead child. You told me you copied the articles and sent them to friends, relatives and people in the work place to let them know that it was "normal" to want to talk about your child. You also told me that in your opinion, maintaining a sacred bond to your dead child was vital to your well being. From 1983 to the present, I have conducted a number of studies with both bereaved parents and siblings. Findings from these studies indicate the ongoing connection you have to your dead child is a catalyst and an enduring energy which sustains one through the most intense time of grief and gives survivors the courage to face loss that bereaved parents and their living children must endure. The deep pain of grief comes with a deep introspective searching for answers to agonizing questions about why your child's death had to be part of your life and about your shattered dreams. Research shows that this period of grief is characterized by feelings of hopelessness, profound sadness, aching loneliness and a belief that you will not and cannot ever be happy again. Physical reaction may include fast heartbeats, shortness of breath, and a sense of fear or panic that more bad things will happen to other loved ones. Many bereaved parents expressed feeling angry, blaming themselves and others for their child's death. You spoke of being preoccupied with endless thoughts and feelings about the circumstances surrounding his or her death and the difficulty of coping and adapting to your new, permanently changed lives. You said that this was a time of "feeling confusion about who you were, not knowing yourself anymore and feeling detached from others" and how these thoughts and feelings demanded and used up the little bit of energy you had each morning.

Grief work is infinitely private, painful work. Part of you died with your child and now you must struggle with letting go of your old self as you endure the unknown of who you will become. One newly bereaved parent described this process by saying, "I liked who I was before my child died. I don't like who I am now. I barely know myself." In the beginning of grief you were consumed with the myriad reminders of your child's life and death. As time passed, you found occasional peaceful respites from grief as the episodes of deep grieving gradually became less frequent and intense. Finally, you described knowing you were having more good days than bad. This marked the beginning of leaving behind some of the suffering and sorrow of intense grief and having the energy available for keeping and cherishing the love and connection you have to your dead child. Surviving the struggle with death and finding life again renews energy and is manifest in your becoming stronger and better able to cope with your loss. You gain a realization of having become more tolerant of yourself and others and becoming a part of life again. The hardest work of becoming a survivor is learning to live without the physical presence of your dead child while simultaneously learning to live with his or her emotional and spiritual presence. You find that meaning in your life is derived from your relationship to those you love, including your dead child. The legacy your child has left is a love that transcends time and space.

*Dr. Hogan is an Associate Professor at the University of Miami
(Reprinted from the TCF National Newsletter)*

*-Reprinted from the Nashville April 2007 Newsletter
http://www.tcfnashville.org/nashville_newsletters.htm*



Help us find missing resources.

Please check to see if you have any unreturned books, CDs or videos. We have many new members who may benefit from them. If you have read book that you have found helpful, please share it with someone.

Releasing Anger While Dealing with Loss

By Shirley Wiles-Dickinson

As most of us know, there are certain things that trigger our emotions while on this journey of grief. I think it's safe to say that we all understand there are different stages of grief, different emotions and feelings also. Many people experience anger while grieving. Anger at the deceased, anger at God, anger at the situation, just plain anger.

After my sister was murdered, just under 18 months ago, I experienced anger. I still experience it. I was angry that it happened to my sister. I was angry at God, and I still have a few questions for him. The anger now comes and goes. I think I have taught myself to release the anger when I can and suppress the anger when I need to.

A few months after my sister died, the anger welled up inside me and finally came spilling out. I had days that I wanted to hit something. I knew I couldn't do that. My counselor had told me time and time again, I could feel, think, act in any way I wanted to as long as I didn't cause physical harm to myself or anyone else. If I did that, I would be crossing the line, the line between healthy and unhealthy grief.

My anger and my need to hit something grew. In my home, the door that led from the house to the garage had a half window in it. When I would go to the garage, I would grab the door knob and look at that glass. I often thought, I could punch that window, it wouldn't do much damage. I fought the urge. Every day, I fought that urge.

Finally, I made a sign that read "Do Not Cross That Line." A sensory reminder that kept me from punching that window. Eventually, I did go out and purchase a punching bag, complete with the gloves. My husband hung the bag in the garage for me and I began to use it everyday. I punched and cussed and punched and cussed. Every day, often several times a day, I would go to the garage, pull the gloves on and punch that bag. It felt good. I was releasing the anger in a healthy way. A way that worked for me.

Nine months after my sister's death, I moved back to my home state. Unfortunately, I didn't have a garage or a place for the punching bag in my new home. My son has the bag in his garage, 90 miles away from where I live. I began suppressing the anger more and more.

I needed a new release, a physical release. I had read or heard somewhere about an older lady who felt anger when her husband died. I remembered what she did, so I too, decided to try it. I went to the local Goodwill store and bought as much of the inexpensive glassware I could carry.

I then told my boss what I wanted to do and she okayed it. The glassware stays in the trunk of my car. When I feel the need and I have the opportunity, I drive to work when no one is there. I pull up to the dumpster, retrieve the glass from my trunk and start throwing the glass in the dumpster. I throw with all my might. When the glass shatters inside the dumpster, it's like a release for me. It helps me with the anger.

A third way I've released anger is to write. I write letters, never sending them, to anyone or anything that angers me. Sometimes, just getting the thoughts out of my mind and onto paper, is all it takes. I've written several letters. I re-read them sometimes, I throw them away sometimes. I can always write more letters.

Anger is an overwhelming emotion, especially to those of us who had rarely really experienced anger. Not at this level. My anger comes and goes. Since my sister's murder, I experience anger on different levels, at different times. I feel anger that it happened to my sister. I feel anger that she died in such a tragic way. I feel anger that she died in terror and fear. I feel anger at the choice that one human being made to end another human being's life. I feel angry at the justice system. I still at times feel anger at our higher being.

Anger is okay. It is perfectly normal to feel anger. It's even better when you find ways to release the anger. I suppose I'll be tossing glass in dumpsters and writing letters for a long time to come. It's okay, I'm normal.

Shirley Wiles-Dickinson is the youngest of four girls in a Midwestern family. In 2009, her sister was brutally murdered. She writes about her experience following this loss. To reach her, e-mail okiejes55@aol.com

Reprinted from Open to Hope www.opentohope.com



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Speakers Announced for National Conference!

David Morrell is a bereaved parent and grandparent, author of the poignant *Fireflies*, but perhaps best known for creating *Rambo* (adapted to the big screen with Sylvester Stallone). David's 15-year-old son Matthew died from bone cancer in 1987, a loss that, according to his bio, "haunts not only Morrell's life but his work, as in his memoir about Matthew, *Fireflies*, and his novel *Desperate Measures* whose main character lost a son." Ironically and sadly, David's granddaughter Natalie recently died from the same rare bone cancer that took his son. David's award winning writing career includes more than 30 books with more than 18 million copies of his books printed. David will be the Saturday evening banquet speaker.

Carol Kearns, author of *Sugar Cookies* and a *Nightmare* became a psychologist at the urging of the renowned Elisabeth Kubler-Ross after the death of her 7-year-old daughter who was swept out to sea by a rogue wave. She has appeared as an expert on numerous television shows to discuss the psychological impact of such headline crimes as the Polly Klass murder, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the Columbine school shooting. Carol will be the Friday afternoon banquet speaker.

Mary Rondeau Westra, recently published her memoir *After the Murder of My Son*, created following the senseless and brutally violent death of her son Peter in 2001. She has written numerous short stories and articles for grief publications and presented at the Art of Recovery Workshop sponsored by the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Office of Justice Programs. Mary will be the Sunday closing ceremony speaker.

Mitch Carmody, author of *Letters to My Son*, is a bereaved parent, losing his son Kelly to a cancerous brain tumor and is a twice bereaved sibling, with the loss of his older brother from degenerative cerebral palsy and his twin sister in an automobile accident that also claimed her two young boys. He is the popular workshop presenter of "Whispers of Love, Signs from Our Children." Mitch also performs interpretive sign language, is a staff writer for *Living With Loss* magazine, an accomplished artist and creator of the innovative 20 Faces of Grief and the S.T.A.I.R.S. model of grief staging. Mitch will be the Opening Ceremony speaker.

Lots of activities are planned for the 2011 conference:

- Friendship, understanding, and hope in everything that makes up the conference from workshops and banquets, to sharing sessions and the Walk to Remember.
- More than 100 workshops for parents, siblings, grandparents, and those who care about them covering most topics related to the death of a child. This includes many workshops for parents with no surviving children.
- Orientation for first-timers and siblings. Memory boards (please bring a picture-or a hanging memento---up to 8"X10").
- A complete sibling program with 26 workshops from which to choose, as well as a hospitality room, sharing sessions, and a trip to the Sea Life Minnesota.
- The twelfth annual Compassionate Friends two-mile Walk to Remember® Sunday, July 17 that starts at the host hotel, the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis South.
- Friday afternoon and Saturday evening banquets culminating with a remembrance candle lighting at the close of the Saturday banquet.
- A special Friday evening performance of "How to Talk Minnesota The Musical," the state's longest running and most successful homegrown musical comedy playing to an estimated 1 million visitors.
- A variety of gifts and mementos available in the Butterfly Boutique and through the Silent Auction and Raffle!
- A Reflection Room providing a peaceful atmosphere and tranquil environment inviting you to withdraw into private reflection.
- A complete bookstore provided by our friends at Centering Corporation who will have it stocked with books, audio and video CDs and DVDs, and other items of interest to bereaved parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, and professionals. And don't forget to stop by to meet Barney the therapy dog!

Support the Walk to Remember

A very popular event at every TCF National Conference is The Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember which will be held the closing day of the conference, Sunday, July 17th starting at 8 a.m. from the conference host hotel, the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel Minneapolis South. This will be the twelfth TCF walk and we expect 1200 to register and join in this special event.

Those participating can help the Walk to Remember to mean even more by asking friends, relatives, and business acquaintances to personally sponsor you for the Walk through a donation. Every dollar donated by sponsors and our walkers will be used to support TCF programs across the country.

SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Grief Waits. If you put it away and try to ignore it, it will simply wait until you have no choice but to experience it.

We grieve as intensely as we love.

There is no "normal" in grieving.

You will never be the same person you were before your loss.

You must make a conscious decision to "get better."

There are no set-in-concrete stages or timelines in grief.

Other people will not understand your grief unless you share it.

It is okay to talk about your loved one as long as you want.

It is okay to keep their belongings as long as you want.

It is okay to include them in celebrations and special occasions for as long as you want.

"Finding closure" is not a requirement of healing. For many, it is not even an option.

Even in death . . . love remains.

"THEN"

*If I had seen what I see now when I was blinded by sorrow,
I would have surely not believed and would have turned the other way
and so you hid it from my view,
and waited for the moment when I would feel another's sadness
before I felt my own.*

*from Sandy Goodman
www.loveneverdies.com*



**Humankind has not
woven the web of life.
We are but one thread within it.
Whatever we do to the web,
we do to ourselves.
All things are bound together.
All things connect.**

-Chief Seattle-

"When we are bowled over by grief and our response is to eat a pizza, we halt our ability to move through the grief as well as our confidence that it won't destroy us. If you don't allow a feeling to begin, you also don't let it end."

- Geneen Roth, Women Food and God

Holding Onto Love

Trees and flowers seem suddenly reborn,
As another spring arrives fresh and new,
Surrounded by such beauty,
My thoughts turn to you.
As another college graduation looms,
Great excitement fills the air,
Glancing at the smiling students,
I still search for strawberry blonde hair,
No matter what I do in life
You are always there,
I feel your presence constantly,
As each new experience we share.
Though physically, you have left us,
Your love remains here to stay,
A bond so strong and nourishing,
It gets us through another day.

*By Chuck Collins
Burke/Springfield/Fairfax Chapter TCF*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Compassionate Friends of Southwest Dallas County meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the parlor of the First United Methodist Church in Duncanville. The church address is 403 S. Main St. The parlor is located behind the church at 206 W. Daniel St. Child care is available.

Darcie Sims is Coming to Dallas

Thursday, April 7th, 2011, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Free Community Presentation

Just Keep Breathing: Tips for Surviving the Grief Journey

Darcie Sims an accomplished grief educator who combines her personal grief experiences, grief education background and engaging sense of humor to attract large audiences of community members & healthcare professionals wherever she speaks.

To find out more information, please contact GriefWorks Director Larry Barber by email at lbarber@christian-works.org
Or by calling 972-960-9981



NEWSLETTER POLICY

Sponsoring a newsletter is a way to remember your child at any special time through the year. You may include a picture of your child (if emailed please use JPEG format) and a brief (100 words or less) comment about your child. *To guard against identity theft, please do not include full birth or death dates.* A donation of \$20.00 will help cover the cost of postage for the newsletter. Please make all submissions no later than the 20th of the month prior to which you wish them to appear.

This is your newsletter. Please feel free to submit your own writings, book reviews, articles or poems you have found helpful. Be sure to include the author's name and source. Articles may have to be edited for space.

Please email to: tcfswdallas@sbcglobal.net

Or mail to:

Bill Campbell

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Waxahachie, TX. 75167

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NEWSLETTER
2011
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 380011
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The Southwest Dallas County Chapter of The Compassionate Friends hopes that you have benefited from receiving this newsletter. Our purpose is to support and aid families in the positive resolution of their grief following the death of a child. If you no longer wish to continue receiving this newsletter please mail this page to the return address or email tcfswdallas@sbcglobal.net so your name can be removed from our list.