



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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 Tour 2011

Please Join Us For An Evening With Alan Pedersen

First United Methodist Church of Duncanville

Aldersgate Fellowship Hall

427 AVENUE C

7:00 pm



Alan and his wife Denise are scheduled to be our guests at the March 15, 2011 meeting. If you have not seen Alan at our previous meetings or are not familiar with him, he and Denise are bereaved parents. Alan lost his daughter, Ashley in 2001. Denise lost her son Sean in 2004.

Alan and Denise spent last year touring the country performing at events for bereaved parents. During each event, Alan uses his gentle mix of humor and straight-from-the-heart talk wrapped around powerful songs about love, loss and healing to make for a unique experience you will not soon forget. Alan will be performing songs from his newest CD "Peace in the Mourning" as well as those from his previous releases.

If you unable to attend on the 15th, Alan will be appearing at The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills on Tuesday, March 8. The program will begin promptly at 7:30. Admission is free (donations will be accepted) and refreshments will be available. Due to the nature of the program, this event is only open to adults. Childcare will not be available.

Please contact Steve Roberts sjroberts1216@hotmail.com if you have any questions or need additional information.

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

OUR CHILDREN, SIBLINGS AND GRANDCHILDREN REMEMBERED



BIRTHDAYS

Roy Dyer son of Lillie, stepson of George
Mina Rehman daughter of Khurram&Nikki
Shaunda Robinson Johnson daughter of James&Joyce
Glenn Shugart son of Robert stepson of Betty
Erin Michael Clay son of Rande, nephew of Nancy



ANNIVERSARIES

Jason Kramberger son of Nancy, stepson of Ken
Jacquilyn Sue DuMond granddaughter of Heather
Barrett Durfee son of Laurie
Bradley David Gilliland son of Diane
Mark Barbara son of Jean
Rhonda Renee' Mott daughter of Marvin&Juanita
Abbie Danielle Adams granddaughter of Garry&Mary
Christian Austin Cooksey son of Jesse&Ka



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



34th National Conference
Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN
July 15-17, 2011



Save the Date: TCF's 34th National Conference will be held in Minneapolis/St. Paul July 15-17, 2011 at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel. Reservations are now being accepted. Special rates are available. You will find it to be another great conference with around 100 workshops, sharing sessions, special keynote speakers at the Opening, Closing and Friday Afternoon and Saturday Evening banquets, a completely stocked bookstore. TCF's Walk to Remember will be held Sunday morning.

The first keynote speaker has been announced. David Morrell, bereaved parent and grandparent, author of the poignant *Fireflies*, but perhaps best known for creating *Rambo* (adapted to the big screen with Sylvester Stallone), will be the Saturday evening keynote speaker at TCF's 34th National Conference. 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. Eighteen million copies of his books have been printed and his work has been translated into 26 languages.

The Unique Nature of Sibling Loss

I can still remember the call that told me my younger brother was dead. It was from my grandmother. Funnily enough, I'd been contemplating that my grandparents were getting old and that I needed to prepare myself for their deaths. I never expected that I would receive a call from them to tell me that my brother had crashed his car into a lamp post on the way home from a concert and was killed immediately. He was 17; I was 22.

The death of a sibling is strange. Everyone asks how your parents are, but everyone seems to forget about you. It's as if you are not important. Your role is there to provide support to everyone else. Somehow it didn't surprise me when I went looking for information on the internet and found that siblings were known as the "forgotten mourners."

The relationship between siblings is unique. There is no one else in the world that you have such a love-hate relationship with. I know that I would curse my brother harshly but if anyone else did, then I would attack them for it. Siblings have a right that no one else has. It means that you can show your worst to them and know that they will still forgive you afterwards and speak to you like nothing was wrong.

Some people attribute this gift to parents too. Yet it is different. As a sibling, you are allowed to know hidden activities, beliefs, attitudes and dreams that are never shared with parents. As your sibling grows older, this perspective can be transferred to partners but siblings seem to share the most information.

When you lose a sibling, you also lose your identity. Your sibling has always been part of your life. They have helped define who you are and your role within the family. It leads you to question who you are and what your life purpose is.

If you are younger like myself, you also lose the chance to develop a relationship based on friendship with someone who has known you your whole life. I know that my relationship with my brother was changing as he died. Although he was my younger brother, his wisdom at times made him appear to be my older brother. I was grateful for someone who was looking out for me. And I was so angry that this had been taken away from me. I was also angry that I would never see him get married, have children or grow old so I could tease him about how ugly he was getting.

Your sibling is also your peer, so it leads you to question your own mortality. It also leads you to question why them and not me. In my attempt to make sense of this question, I moved into the realm of helping others affected by loss transform grief, find peace and feel more positive about the future. It was my way of justifying my brother's death.

It's now been over 8 years since my brother died, and I am at peace with it. It's ok that I'll never fight with him again or hug and make up. It's ok that I'll never know what man he would have grown into. I still think about him every day and I talk to him a lot. I've created a new relationship with him that continues on after death. After all, he is my brother and always will be. Not even death can take that away from me.

Tabitha Jayne is the founder of "Transform Grief. Live Fully. Thrive Loss" coaching and workshops which help busy professionals reduce the stress of bereavement in already stressful lives and create happier, healthier, more meaningful lives in tribute to their loved one.

www.tabithajayne.com



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.

Letting Grief Out One Word at a Time

by Ron Villano

What do holidays and journal writing have in common? They show how you feel. And that is perhaps the toughest and roughest part of living life as a man — that homegrown instinct to bottle up the negativity in order to always show strength. It means that feelings and emotions get trapped deep inside. It is at the very heart of why men's grief is so desperately personal, especially at the holiday and family celebration times.

I believe that our minds are like garages. We store everything up there. Ideas, beliefs and values...many of which have all been shifted and moved about since the loss. For some of us, the overworked mind begins to shut down and we become isolated and withdrawn. For others, we get into overworked mode and do all sorts of things to avoid that quiet time, when these powerful thoughts can become loud, unavoidable and hard to deal with.

The build-up of grief for men is a desperately personal one because of these trapped feelings. They become the enemy to fight. And because you are waging war with yourself, you can't call your buddies to bring backup. The fear that these emotions will come pouring out like a fire hose makes us work harder and harder using more and more strength to fight back.

The result is that the male grief journey gets pushed off. Very often, men will break down from this mental battle years or even decades after loss, after having lived a quietly stressed and sometimes reckless life of battle.

But there are ways to start letting some of that emotional pressure out without it being a major outburst. One way that I most recommend is daily writing or journaling.

OK — hold on. I'm not suggesting creating the next best-selling novel. It is more about the process of emptying out your mind's garage one sentence at a time. When you write, you can see what you've been thinking. It is a completely private, safe, and effective way to take the pressure off without bursting at the seams.

It starts by making an agreement with yourself to write at least one sentence a day for the next seven days. The words do not have to be about anything in particular. In this case, the act of writing is the goal. Getting used to seeing your thoughts on paper is the gateway to helping your mind learn how to empty out. Could be something as simple as, "I will write more tomorrow."

One sentence is just long enough to stop the busyness of the day for the moment; one sentence is just long enough of an activity to make you do something new for the day. So it helps both sides of grief in men — the loner and the over-doer. The goal is to make writing a permanent part of your journey.

As I said, this isn't a novel for publication and it's not going to be given to your high school English teacher either. It is not meant for anyone else to see, except you. So — short hand, long hand, hidden codes are all ok. So is complaining, accusing, arguing. And so is showing sadness, remorse, and pain. Once you begin to recognize these emotions, you will become familiar with expressing them and see that they are not your enemy at all. Just a natural part of who you are.

As you become familiar with the thoughts you have on the inside, then you will become more comfortable to begin talking with someone else and start gathering the right type of people who are going to help you along in your grief journey. It might be your spouse, another family member, or professional counselor. Each can help you to quiet down the battle in your mind and start you on a new path toward peace.

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Ron Villano, M.S., LMHC, ASAC is the leading expert in working through change. As a father who lost his 17-year old son in an auto accident, he always speaks from the heart. As a licensed psychotherapist and life coach, he counsels others on how to work through difficult times. Visit www.RonVillano.com to listen to his featured interviews and for additional information.

"Only those who have known so great a love can feel so deep a sorrow."

Author Unknown

Peace In My Time

by Dave Roberts

As I rapidly approach Jeannine's eighth anniversary date(3/1) I find myself being more at peace with her physical absence. Don't get me wrong, there are days when the pain of her absence is and will be as intense as it was in my early grief, but overall I have felt less emotional turmoil than in past years. I think that in addition to being able to better manage the emotional roller coaster of my grief, I have developed a greater level of understanding about the wondrous spiritual relationship that I enjoy with Jeannine, that is ongoing and dynamic. I always felt that my relationship with Jeannine was ongoing, but the past few months have taken my understanding to a whole new level. And for that I am grateful.

I am also grateful for the number of wonderful people who have graced me with their presence on my journey. I have also discovered that the support network I have during my eighth year of my journey is different than it was in the beginning. Many of the people who offered their support in the beginning are not a part of my current support network now. In my early grief, I would have lamented about their absence. Today, I realize that they were just as important to my adjustment to life without the physical presence of Jeannine. I have come to believe that the connections that I made with them were destined to be for a short period of time. It is unrealistic to believe that our support network will ever stay the same. What is important to me is that we continue to recognize the need for ongoing support and utilize those individuals who can best support us in our journeys, at the present time. We may make lifetime connections or not, but any quality support we can avail ourselves of is all good.

May your days be peaceful and fulfilling.

David J. Roberts, LMSW, CASAC, became a bereaved parent after his daughter Jeannine died of cancer at the age of 18. He has been employed in the addictions field for 24 years and is also an adjunct professor in the psychology and psychology-child life departments at Utica College, Utica, New York. Visit his website: www.bootsyandangel.com

Waiting for the Music to Return

by Jane Newton

September 3, 1996 is a day that changed my life forever. My 24 year old son, Chad, died suddenly and unexpectedly from a blockage to his heart. He had graduated from Auburn University with a degree in Chemical Engineering June 1995 and married his sweetheart, Mandy, April 1996. So many of my friends on FB are also bereaved parents and you all know how that day defines the rest of your life. I like to think certain things about me changed for the "good". I love deeper and never miss the opportunity to tell those I love how much I love them. My priorities changed. Some people patiently waited for me to "return to normal"... "find closure"or "get over the loss of my son". For those of us who have lost children....that never happens. For those that haven't lost children, I pray you never find out. There are a few rare individuals who can understand our pain without going through it...but most can not. I resented those folks in the beginning...I hated all the advice they wanted to give me....Oh I know just how you feel, I lost my mother or father or grandmother or grandfather or spouse or some even said "I lost my dog". My own mother-in-law proceeded to tell me it was harder to lose a spouse than a child. She had never lost either and been married for 50+ years. I was one of those people too... before I lost my son. Anyway, I share this to say that if it had not been for TCF and other bereaved parents I have no idea how I would have survived.

I found a local chapter in Tucker, GA and began attending the meetings 2 months after Chad died. About 6 months later, someone at the meeting asked for a volunteer to set up a Chapter Website. Wayne knew a lot about computers so I volunteered him...he did not attend the meetings. Needless to say Wayne was upset that I had volunteered him to do this since he knew absolutely nothing about setting up websites. I called the lady back the next day and told her Wayne did not feel comfortable doing it. She said one of the siblings volunteered her husband (a Georgia Tech Computer Major) to work with Wayne to set one up. Wayne agreed to work with him. That was the beginning of the Atlanta Area of Compassionate Friends Website. We launched it in Spring of 1997. We had only the HOME page and the WALL OF MEMORY.

Gradually Wayne began to learn how to do it on his own and also teach me how to edit and create other web pages. Once I got the hang of it...I LOVED IT. Every afternoon when I came home from work I would sit down and create Memorial Websites for Children Gone Too Soon. I created all kinds of web pages for the bereaved. It was a creative outlet for me in many ways. It was healing for me.

I started sending out articles in the form of emails about 1998-1999. I remember one of our members requesting NOT to receive the articles so I thought how do I do this for only those who want the articles? That is how the TCF Atlanta Online Sharing began....we started with 37 members and now have about 2,000 from all over the world. About a year and a half ago I set up a Facebook Group for our TCF Atlanta members and we have about 950 members.

Waiting for the Music to Return

What Happened to My Baby?

by Clara Hinton

There is nothing quite like sharing the exciting news that a new baby is on the way. Almost immediately talk begins about where to put the nursery, what kind of crib to buy, and how wonderful the holidays will be with a new baby in the family. Life takes on new meaning, and all talk centers around the excitement of the coming little one.

High on the list of discussions is hearing the baby's first heartbeat. That one event is always a monumental event. Often, many phone calls are made to friends and relatives letting them know how exciting it was to hear the swoosh swoosh sound of the baby's heart beating. Even more exciting is watching the baby's heart on the first ultrasound. There is nothing quite like seeing the rhythmic beating of your own little miracle!

One of the biggest devastations any mother can experience is when she goes to the doctor fully expecting to hear the sound of her baby's heart beating, and instead, the room echoes only silence. There are no words that can come close to explaining the emptiness that suddenly rushes in where just moments before there was only joy. A mother is left asking the only question that comes to mind, "What happened? What happened to my baby?"

Early pregnancy loss is more common than we like to think. Many statistics give a figure of fifty percent of all pregnancies ending in miscarriage. With today's highly sensitive technology, it is possible to detect a baby's heartbeat as early as seven weeks. This means that very early in a pregnancy the level of excitement is running high along with the expectations of holding a baby.

It is an extremely painful grief when a mother has to suddenly and unexpectedly shift gears from joyful anticipation to shattered dreams in a matter of only moments. There is an emotional shock as well as a physical reversal that must be dealt with, and that is certainly no easy task.

It is very common for a mother to slip into a slight depression following the sudden, unexpected, unexplained loss of her baby. She is left with the emptiest feeling ever—the very life she once supported has ended. Unfortunately, not all people will understand the pain and grief of early pregnancy loss, and the lack of support complicates the grieving process even more. An overwhelming feeling of being alone can soon take over a mother's empty heart.

Experiencing this type of unexpected loss is extremely difficult for a mother. Her body and mind are forced into a quick reversal, and she will be faced head-on with the hard reality of loss. During this time of physical and emotional relocation and adjustment, it is extremely important for a mother to get proper rest, eat nutritious meals, and keep well hydrated.

Very rarely are there any real answers as to why the baby's heart stopped beating, and that adds to the grief and pain of loss. We want answers, and we expect answers, but the fact is that often there are no answers to be found. Fear of future pregnancies becomes a common side effect of early pregnancy loss, and can compound grief issues.

Early pregnancy loss is a difficult, painful loss and requires a lot of hard work to get through the emotional roller coaster. By not rushing the grief process, a mother can deal with the physical and emotional changes taking place. Each day will become one more day closer to healing.

Visit Silent Grief for articles, resources, message boards, and additional support for healing through loss.

Also Visit www.clarahinton.com for information about Grief Relief, Resiliency, and a free weekly subscription to Weekly Focus.

I Cannot Think You're Not Alive Somewhere

I cannot think you're not alive somewhere.
I think of you just as I did before.
No sudden gust of wind has closed the door
Or made your presence vanish in thin air.
I write you this because I know you're there;
That even after death there must be more.
So does faith one's inner sun restore
After bitter darkness few can bear.
My mind and heart have not yet lost a friend
Even though my senses are bereft,
For you remain the witness of my soul.
No mere accident our love can end
So long as I have will and memory left,
And you lie silent on some unknown shoal.

**You are not forgotten loved one
Nor will you ever be
As long as life and memory last
We will miss thee.
We will miss you now
Our hearts are sore
As time goes by
We miss you more
Your loving smile
Your gentle face
No one can fill your vacant place**

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:

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NEWSLETTER
2011
MARCH

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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.