



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.

SOUTHWEST DALLAS COUNTY CHAPTER

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SHAUNDA ROBINSON JOHNSON

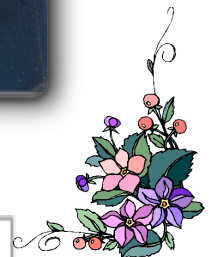
Shaunda, three years ago you were taken from us so suddenly. Our hearts and our lives will never be the same. We miss you terribly and think about you every day. Your life here on earth was too short but God has appointed you our Guardian Angel. We will always remember you.

*Love,
Mama and Daddy*

LESLEY MICHELLE CAMPBELL

Another birthday and another year has passed since you left us. Not a day goes by you are not remembered. Your bright smile is still with us. We find comfort that we will be together again.

*With Much Love,
Dad, Joan, and Kaylee*



This newsletter is sponsored by James and Joyce Robinson and Bill and Joan Campbell

OUR CHILDREN, SIBLINGS AND GRANDCHILDREN REMEMBERED

BIRTHDAYS



Pat Durney sister of Sharon
Barrett Durfee son of Laurie
Rebecca Erin Johnstone daughter of Nancy
Edward Carlton Jones III son of Edward & Pauletta
Tara Louise Patterson daughter of Tim stepdaughter of Holly
Paul Alejandro Shanor son of James & Amparo
Lesley Michelle Campbell daughter of Bill stepdaughter of Joan
Charles R. O' Neal II son of Charles & Robin



ANNIVERSARIES

Shaunda Robinson Johnson daughter of James & Joyce
Hope Jalynn Sandle daughter of Loretta
Cindy Houston daughter of John & Susan
Aaron Oliver Williams son of Sandra
Eric McGraw grandson of Carolyn
Brian Dwain Higgins son of Jo Ann
Robert Velez, Jr. son of Robert
Scott Quinlan son of Sue



"Grief is always with us. But so is joy.

The greatest mistake we make is to assume that if we have one we can't have the other. Both make up the totality of the human experience."

John E. Welshons, Awakening from Grief

SEASONS

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out - because crawl out we must, on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives - including ourselves, for we are different now.

We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must move forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point that our world changed. I used to say "ended." Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we shares will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again - and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again - or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

Renée Little

TCF, Fort Collins, Colorado

A Love Song

**The mention of my child's name
May bring tears to my eyes,
But it never fails to bring
Music to my ears.
If you are really my friend,
Please, don't keep me
From hearing the beautiful music.
It soothes my broken heart
And fills my soul with love.**

~Nancy Williams, TCF NJ

DREAMS OF A BEREAVED MOTHER

Faye McCord, TCF Chapter Leader / Jackson, MS
~ In "dedication & honor" of all bereaved mothers ~
And in loving memory of my son, Lane McCord (1/26/65 -
9/13/98)

I brought a child into the world and thought my life was complete.

I bowed my head and thanked the Lord for giving this child to me.

My dreams were of the future and of how my child would be,
Of how he would run and play games like hide-and-seek and
always run back to me.

I dreamed of baths and bubbles and bedtime stories in the night.

And cuts on tiny fingers, and how I would kiss it and make it all right.

Of schools and pets and friends and birthday parties through the years.

Of teen-age years of laughter, music, and sometimes maybe even tears.

My dreams included a wedding ceremony where my child would say, "I do".

I envisioned a spouse and children and even a house, brand new.

The children my child would one day have would grace my life once more,

And I would thank the Lord again for the blessings He had in store.

As the dreams I fashioned in my mind turned to the years ahead,

I never once suspected my dreams would turn to nightmares instead.

Now the nightmares still haunt me - My heart still bleeds inside.

Since my dreams turned to nightmares the day my precious child died.

While some of the dreams had materialized, others came crashing to a halt.

The searing pain of grief and questions now filled my every thought.

How could I live my life without my child - How could I possibly survive?

When the dreams I once had for my child were no longer alive?

Eventually, I came to realize that I must find new ways to dream.

And honor the things my child enjoyed on earth, his memories to redeem.

And while I will never get over the horrible pain of losing my child, so dear.

I will survive by blending his life and love into my life, and that will keep him near.

Isabelle Efstathiou~

Do you suppose they meet like us
To lend support and love?

As we assemble, do they gather too,
Watching from above?

Do you suppose they ask our God
To care for parents, here?

Just as we beseech Him

To hold our children dear?

Do you suppose, among
themselves,

They comfort one another?

When they see deep grief consume

Their Father or their Mother?

Do you suppose, together,

They wipe away our tears?

Holding hands, as we do,

To cleanse away our fears?

Do you suppose they listen

To the breaking hearts we share?

As we tell our stories

Our tragedies laid bare?

And, do you suppose they know the
Truth,

These children whom we adore?

Knowing fully that God's Love

In abundance He will outpour?

And, do you suppose they
understand

Far better than we mortals?

That peace and joy and soul's
content

Await us at the portals?

And, do you suppose until the day

They see us face to face

They're tugging on God's
heartstrings

To keep us in His Grace?

An Unfinished Mother **Written by Clara Hinton**

When child loss occurs, a mother goes through a difficult time of emotional turmoil and questioning. “Am I still a mother?” “Does my child still have a birthday each year, or does time stand still?” “Can the mother/child relationship continue to grow, or am I now an ‘unfinished mother’?”

Losing a child places a mother on a road that begins a lonelier journey than ever expected— one that can never really be explained. There was a beginning, but with the death of the child, there is no middle and no end. Everything seems so unfinished. Hopes and dreams were stopped far too soon. Joy was snatched away so suddenly. A mother is left with empty arms and an empty heart. Nothing can ever be complete when a child’s life ends.

When the death of a child occurs, a mother is stopped in her tracks, and she suddenly feels inadequate and incomplete. She wears a new name. She is an “unfinished mother”, never being able to see the rest of the picture. She will never be able to watch her child mature into a young adult. She will never be able to see all the pieces fit together. The picture will always have part of the scenery missing. It is so painful to be an unfinished mother! Child loss makes everything seem so empty and incomplete.

The reality of child loss is devastating to a mother. There are overwhelming feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and most often feelings of failure. These feelings can overwhelm a mother for several months following the death of a child, and it can be quite difficult to build a support system to carry a mother through this roller coaster of emotions.

Very few people will understand a mother’s explanation of feeling like she is an unfinished mother.

There will come a critical point in this journey of grief when a mother must reach deep inside her inner resources and make a conscious decision to accept herself just as she is— a mother whose heart has been touched by the pain and grief of child loss. Only then can she start to put together some of the broken pieces and begin to feel like there will be a day when she will feel more like a complete mother than an unfinished mother.

When a child dies, life is suddenly thrown completely off balance. A mother is left feeling like her identity has been taken away. It is often a long difficult journey to find that place of identity as a mother again. It’s hard to understand that there is unfinished living that will never be completed. Peace can finally come to a mother’s heart when she realizes that there is a big difference between having unfinished business and being left feeling like an unfinished mother.

A mother is never “unfinished.” No matter how brief her time was with her child, the bond of love between mother and child was complete. A mother’s love for her child is unending. Dreams may shatter and circumstances may change, but a mother’s love remains strong. As a mother travels the path to healing, it is important for her to remind herself often that she is a mother forever. Her motherhood did not stop when her child died. This understanding of motherhood releases the feelings of guilt and failure and allows a mother to begin to see herself as a whole person again— a complete mother.

A mother is never an “unfinished mother.” A mother’s love runs far too deep to ever be called unfinished!

from TCF Phillipines

A Mother’s Love

I need no pictures,
To remember your warm smile.
The lines of your face are embedded in my
memory of you.
I gave you life in one second of pain
For which you returned thirteen years of yourself
—
Sometimes quiet, sometimes noisy, but always
thoughtful.

Sometimes I hear a voice
That sounds like you, and I pause.
That pang of hurt stems from a tiny empty spot that
you have left in my life.
I carried you in my womb, then later in my arms.
But I will carry you forever in my heart.

*By Joy Morning
(for her friend Ginny Pelczynski)
TCF Phoenix, AZ*

A Special Note to Siblings and Fathers

An emotional and sentimental day is Mother’s Day. It can be a very lonely day for moms, even if there are other children in the family because that one child is not there to wish her a Happy Mother’s Day.

Siblings, if mom is not responding to you as you would like her to on this day, give her a big hug and tell her you love her. Be gentle. She does love you. But she is also a mother who is lonely for that absent child.

Dads, hold your wife close and tenderly on that day. She may do a lot of daydreaming and crying. And her mind may wander back to when...

If the child who died is an only child, Dad, be extra kind and loving. Maybe take her to lunch or dinner, because even though that child is not here with her, she is still a mother, and a mother forever, she will be.

I am a mother of two beautiful children who are with me. I am a mother of two children that have died. I am still the mother of four children on Mother’s Day.

*Verna Smith
TCF Newsletter Forth Worth, TX*

Emotional Jet Lag

Working with grieving people for more than twenty years has given us a wealth of practical experience. Amongst the many observations we have made is the fact that grieving people often seem to be slower to respond to even the simplest of questions, and to be baffled by tasks that are normally routine. Imagine that your brain has been filled up with three quarts of molasses. That is pretty much the effect that a major loss event can have on your capacity to think, feel, and participate in life.

We offer this truth for the dual purpose of helping griever and for helping those around griever. If you have experienced a major significant emotional loss of any kind, there is a high probability that your ability to concentrate on day to day activities may be severely limited. You may have an idea, walk to the next room to act on it, and when you get there, realize that you have not got the faintest idea what it was you had intended to do. If you hear nothing else, please hear that this is a normally occurring phenomenon. Recognize that your entire being - emotional, physical, and spiritual - is focused on the loss that just occurred. When possible it is a good idea to avoid driving and working with any tools that require concentration and mental coordination. An incredibly high percentage of serious and fatal auto accidents befall grieving people.

It is essential that you recognize this naturally occurring inability to concentrate. It is equally important that you not judge yourself harshly for being dazed, confused, and preoccupied. But most important, you must be gentle with yourself. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by hammering yourself for being normal and human.

For those of you who are near and dear to friends who have recently experienced a painful loss of any kind. Read all of the above - reread all of the above. You must recognize that the inability to concentrate is the single most common of all responses to loss. Do not berate. Do not scold. Do not have an opinion or judgement. Remember your friend is on another planet - the planet grief. Their entire being is trying to make sense out of an incredibly painful experience.

By definition, "grief is the normal and natural emotional response to loss of any kind." Most of us have been falsely socialized to shift the emotional reaction into the intellect. But, the head is not broken - the heart is broken. You must resist the temptation to make intellectual comments to your grieving friend. For example; while it is intellectually accurate that "life goes on," many griever have a hard time participating in life at all, so life "goes on" without them.

If someone staggered towards you with an arrow sticking out of their chest, and blood dripping from the

by Russell Friedman & John W. James of The Grief Recovery Institute

wound, you would probably recognize that the person might be in massive physical pain. It is unlikely that you would say "Don't feel bad, at least it wasn't a poison arrow," and just keep walking past them. More likely, you would say "My gosh, you must be in terrible pain, let me call an ambulance."

Yet when someone's heart has been broken by a major loss, most people say "Don't Feel bad, you should feel grateful you had them so long." While it may be intellectually accurate that you have a great deal of gratitude in that relationship, that is usually not the foremost emotional response to the death of a loved one. Perhaps it would be helpful to imagine that there is an emotional arrow sticking out of their chest. It will remind you to respond more helpfully.

Even though death can be separated into two categories, sudden death or long term illness, ultimately all death is sudden. Don't make the mistake of thinking that if someone has tended to a dying loved one for a long time, that they would automatically have less pain than someone who has lost someone to a sudden death. In fact, it is a good idea to make no assumptions at all. The finality of death, along with end of any hopes of a miracle remission or cure, brings a tremendous amount of emotional pain.

For many people, drowning in a sea of painful emotions, numbness seems like a constant companion. It may take hours or even days to sort out the feelings and thoughts that have been unearthed by the death of a loved one. The death of a "less than loved one" may produce even more confusing emotions.

We have been talking mainly about reactions to death. The emotional response to divorce, while different, is parallel. Divorce is the "death of a relationship." Quite often, one divorcing partner feels as if there has been a sudden death and one feels like they have been caught in a long term illness. In either situation, there is liable to be the same inability to concentrate that affects those responding to death. It is also quite probable that those reeling from the affects of a divorce will have some difficulty identifying the feelings they are experiencing. As we pointed out earlier, this reduced ability to concentrate is normal. Don't fight it. Be gentle with yourself. Avail yourself of the **Grief Recovery Handbook** as soon as possible. It is never too soon to begin to recover.

Friends, be alert to the emotional arrow that you can't see. Your friend has a broken heart. You need to be gentle also.

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.

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**

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 by 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

CHAPTER STEERING COMMITTEE

Chapter Leader	Jerry Palady jpalady@palcoecs.com
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Librarian	Joyce Robinson
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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 book 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*



Join TCF Members As We Walk to Remember Our Children

Whether or not you can participate in TCF's Walk to Remember® July 17th in Minneapolis, Minnesota, you have the opportunity to create a website in memory of a special child and help The Compassionate Friends to raise crucial funds to help bereaved families across the United States.

You can do this by joining hundreds of others in TCF's popular Walk to Remember Friends Asking Friends® fundraiser.

The Southwest Dallas County Chapter Team is up and ready for your donations.

Just go to www.tcfwalktoremember.org and join our team it only takes a little time. You can also make your own page in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling.

Click on "Event Enrollment" on the left. Click on "Join A Team". Then scroll down to **TCF Southwest Dallas**. Fill out the information and you will be able to make a donation and create your page.

Attain your fundraising goal by inviting friends, family, and business acquaintances to visit your memorial web page and provide support (they can come to your website and donate using a secure server; you can also receive checks, enter them on your website as pledged, forward the checks to the National Office—noting the Team or Individual name—and we'll mark the check on your website as received).

Thank you to all our "virtual" walkers, team members, team leaders, and TCF chapters accepting this opportunity through the Walk to Remember "Friends Asking Friends" program to make a difference in the lives of families that have experienced the death of a child. We cannot achieve our mission without your support! All teams raising funds through this program by June 24 will be represented by name on a banner to be carried during the Walk to Remember in Minneapolis on July 17. Remember, "Together We Can Make a Difference!!"

NEWSLETTER
2011
MAY

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Southwest Dallas County Chapter
The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 380011
Duncanville, Texas 75138



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.