

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Post Office Box 25573 Greenville, South Carolina 29616

(864) 288-9820 www.tcfofgreenvillesc.org



Monthly Meeting

June 12, 2008

Always the second Thursday of the month

Topic:

**What's on Your Mind?
An Open Discussion Forum**

Facilitated by:

Dick Renner

Meeting Time & Location

7:30 P.M.

Pelham Rd. Baptist Church,
Family Life Center
1108 Pelham Rd., Greenville, SC

When Fathers Weep at Graves

I see them weep
the fathers at the stones
taking off the brave armor
forced to wear in the work place
clearing away the debris
with gentle fingers
inhaling the sorrow
diminished by anguish
their hearts desiring
what they cannot have—
to walk hand in hand
with children no longer held—
to all the fathers who leave
a part of their hearts
at the stones
may breezes underneath
trees of time ease their pain
as they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

—Alice J. Wisler

HUSBAND

I see the grief
behind your earnest eyes.
(You would give anything
To have your child again.)

I feel the helplessness
behind your silent anguish
(You would do anything
To take this hurt away.)

I know you learned
to keep your tears in hiding.
And you were taught
few words to speak for solace—
Not yours, not mine.

I see the grief
behind your earnest eyes.
And I will know
to understand and trust you,
loving father.

*By Sascha Wagner
From "The Sorrow and the Light"*

To My Husband

My love, these past few months
seem to have paralyzed us
in pain and anguish.
And I know, in that state,
The flow of communication
becomes stilted.
The love we are and share,
Is forever, Darling.
But I realize that you have felt,
As I have, a separateness in our
grief.
It's all right, you know, Dear;
I guess it is the nature of a loss so
devastating
that no matter how we try to comfort
one another
Along the strange path of grieving
We sometimes feel so alone.
We have done marvelously; we,
my love, talked, cried, remembered
our son
with tears and smiles.
I know we will laugh again,
My dearest beloved.
We will laugh again – I promise.

*Molly Murphy
TCF, Winnipeg, Canada*

FATHER'S DAY

Warm and sunny day in June
Father's Day.
Children, small and grown
Give gifts to father
Say thanks to father
Say I love you.

But there are fathers
Whose children are not here
To give gifts and say thanks
And say I love you.

Remember the fathers
Whose children are gone,
Because all too often
They grieve in heartbreak
Silence.

*By Sascha Wagner
From "Wintersun"*

Compassionate Friends A Safe Place to Talk

There is a need to talk, without trying to give reasons. No reason is going to be acceptable when you hurt so much. A hug, the touch of a hand, expressions of concern, a willing listener was and still is the things that helped the most. The people who were the greatest help were not judgmental. It's most helpful when people understand that what is needed is to talk about it and that this is part of the grief process.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK** – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

The June 2008 Newsletter is lovingly dedicated to the memory of all our Children . . . gone too soon.

Our Children Remembered:

Erika Leeann Brock
Josh Bryant
Trent Mauldin-Chapman
Kyle Cordell
Candy Cota
Allan Dobson
Alyson Paige Duncan
Randall Barrett Eller
Sarah Ellis
Barron Garrett
E.J. Gonzalez
Charlie Guthrie
Quinn Hall
Stacy Harris
Christopher A. Howard
Jennifer Nicole Hower
Mark Anthony Jones
Jeremy Knoke
Hannah Marie Linder
Troy Mauldin
Brian T. Martin
Sam McCall, Jr.
Mark Miller, Jr.
Schuyler Raiford
Randall Rainey
David Simms Rush
Haley Taylor
Patrick Whitehurst
Joey Williamson

A recent memo from our National Headquarters has urged the local TCF Chapters **NOT** to publish the birthdates of our children. This is because birthdates are often used to commit identity theft. TCF Greenville will comply with this recommendation as identity theft would lead to further grief for our bereaved families. We hope that all will understand this concern.

Graduation Day

It's June and graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and

gown, walking down the aisle to the ever-stirring "Pomp and Circumstance". Now there will be a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you're strange?

As always, you must follow your heart. So go if you'd like to, and don't hide your tears. It's quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others. Just remember that your own instincts are the most important ones, that no one can make this decision for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other people think of you.

It was your child who died. This is your pain, and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way – and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

*Peggy Gibson
TCF Nashville, TN*



LOST GRADUATION

Pomp and Circumstance
Speeches
Happy Faces
Proud Parents
It's just not fair
Because you're not there.
School song playing,
Gifts
Celebrations,
Laughing friends,
We can not share
Because you're not there.
Mortar boards flying,
Diplomas,

Tassels tossed,
Teachers smiling
It's too much to bear,
Because you're not there
*By Sue Snapp
TCF, Tucson, AZ*

Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday.
It'd been a while, you see.
And there, without a warning,
the pain washed over me.

I drove the old way yesterday
and sadness came on strong,
taken back by so much feeling,
since you've been gone so long.

Places seem to lie in wait
to summon up the tears,
to say remember yesterday,
those days when you were here.

Places where you laughed and
played
are places where I cry.
These places hold the memories
that will live as long as I.

*Genesse Gentry
TCF, Marin County, CA*

Welcome You Are Not Alone

We know the heartache that you
bear
We've felt the pain cause we've
been there.

We've share a bond of infinite
sorrow
A hope for peace, strength for
tomorrow.

A time will come when you'll seek
relief
Solace and comfort to ease your
grief.

We welcome you – we shall be
there
We understand. We've much to
share.

TCF, Scranton, PA

For Dads

What I can't understand is how we men will run to someone else to get a small splinter out of our finger but will refuse to ask directions when we are driving and will drive and swear for hours before asking for assistance. The biggest splinter I ever had was when my daughter died. I needed help. Ministers, funeral directors, friends, fellow workers, doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists couldn't help—they didn't know what I was going through. One friend, whose son had been murdered said, "Go to a Compassionate Friends meeting." He knew! I went to a TCF meeting. No one took the splinter out. No one offered any "how to's." No one told me "You should..." No one could, or tried to take away all the pain. But they had been there. They knew, and because they knew, and I knew that they knew, it helped. What I had gone through and will go through in my grief, someone had been there before me. This knowledge has assisted me in my travel through pain. I still have that big hole in my gut. My eyes still fill with tears at odd times.

But I know that I'm not crazy. I know that I am not alone. I know that others have gone through these same things—and for some dumb reason, this helps.

Tom Crouthamel
TCF, Sarasota, FL

THE GRIEF OF FATHER'S

In the early days of my grief, a tear would well up in my eyes, a lump would form in my throat, but you would not know I would hide it, And I Am Strong.

In the middle days of my grief, I would look ahead and see that wall that I had attempted to go around as an ever-present reminder of a wall yet unscaled. Yet I did not attempt to scale it for the strong will survive---And I Am Strong.

In the later days of my grief, I learned to climb over the wall-step by step-remembering, crying, grieving. And the tears flowed steadily as I painstakingly went over. The way was long, but I did make it. For I Am Strong.

Near the resolution of my grief, a tear will well up in my eyes, a lump will form in my throat, but I will let that tear fall--and you will see it. Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care.

*Terry Jago, TCF
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada*

Father's Day... not a big holiday like Christmas or Thanksgiving, but one that holds a lot of meaning for those to whom it applies. For first-time fathers, that Sunday in June brings a feeling of joy and pride. For a long-time dad, it's a reminder of the fulfillment which children may have brought into his life. For those men who have lost a child, it can be a very painful time. For those who must endure their pain in secret and silence, either through their own desire for that approach, or through society's expectations that they must be strong and controlled, it can become a horror. But we in TCF wish to acknowledge the day, because we noted in preparations for Mother's Day, the death of a child does not negate the parenthood of the mom and dad who loved him or her. Love for one's offspring does not die when the body dies, and death does not succeed in robbing us of our parental identity. We wish all bereaved fathers a day of peace. In the midst of our grief and loss, may you experience a taste of good memories and remembered love for your child.

Time for Family

June is a time for family. For many families, summer vacation has begun for the children, and family vacations are in full swing. There are many events that occur during this month. Many families are celebrating graduation from kindergarten, grade school, or high school. Father's Day is also set aside as a tribute to a special person. For most people, June is a month of families coming together.

However, for those of us who have lost children, June can be a month of reminders. Graduation can be a painful reminder of unfulfilled dreams and crushed hopes. Family vacation time can be a reminder of the gap in the family circle. Seeing other "intact families" together often contrasts sharply with our new situation. Feelings like these are normal; we are sane if we feel this way. After all, our lives have changed, there is a big hole in our hearts. We are still a family, but we are not the same.

For bereaved fathers, Father's Day may bring depression and tears. A father who has lost his only child may feel a loss of identity, many people no longer think of him as a father, and there is not a child to love. It doesn't really matter, though. Whether you have lost an only child, or you have other children, you still feel the loss of the child deeply. Be kind to yourself, and let yourself grieve. Let the tears come.

*Lisa Scully
TCF Orange Park, Jacksonville FL*

GRADUATION – A TIME TO REMEMBER

I was driving down the road the other day, thinking of how the retail market makes any event an opportunity for revenue. Graduation seems to fall into that category, with cards and gifts for every Graduate. This time of year reminds me that my graduation from high school was a bittersweet time.

Really, it was the first time I had "surpassed" my older brother, David, in anything significant. I turned the age he was when he died, 18, in the beginning of my senior year of high school. That year was difficult for me, as I felt that I was getting to move past where he had been cut short. Graduation day was no exception. I was happy to be getting out of high school, and looking forward to the coming August when I would go to college. But why was I getting to do these things, and not David? What made me so special that I got to stay here and experience these things? I am still not quite sure of the answer to those questions.

Graduation from high school was really just the first of many events which I have gotten to experience that David never will. College graduation, my wedding, and the birth of my two children are examples. And for me, each event has been a bit bittersweet.

The good news is this: that while time does make it easier to bear day-to-day activities without your sibling, each major event in your life presents itself as a new opportunity to remember your brother or sister, as well. For me, figuring that out was a huge relief, as it meant that my fear of forgetting David was not something I needed to worry about any more. His memory is just as alive for me today, 15 ½ years later, as it was when I took that walk across the stage to accept my high school diploma.

*Amy Baker Ferry
Heart of Florida TCF, Longwood, FL*



TCF National Office

The Compassionate Friends

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TCF National Memory Book

If you would like to have your child's name put in the TCF National Memory Book, please send the following information concerning your child to our National Office. ***Child's Full Name, Date of Birth, Date of Death, Relationship to child, Your Name, Address, and Zip Code. Also include Your Phone Number and E-mail Address.***

Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). *A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor Of a child who has died from their family members or as a memorial from friends. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.*

Birthday Table

Every month at our Chapter Meeting we provide a Birthday Table. In the month of your child's birthday, please bring pictures and small mementos of your child to place on the table. You may also bring a favorite cake, cookies, or other snack in memory of your child. We do this to celebrate and honor our children and to share their special day with others who understand.

Useful Web Sites

www.compassionatefriends.org - TCF National web site. Be sure to visit the ***Other Grief Resources*** section and the ***Sibling Resources***, and the ***Community Online Support*** Section of the National web site.

www.tcfogreenvillesc.org - Greenville, SC Chapter web site.

www.SpiritLyric.com - great grief website with several links to many grief resources including other grief web sites, books, music, etc.

www.suicidereferencelibrary.com - contains very good grief information about suicide and general grief.

www.alivealone.org - Alive Alone for bereaved parents whose only child or all children have died.

www.bereavedparentsusa.org - information for bereaved families and newsletters.

TCF National Convention

Check www.compassionatefriends.com for recent updates. You can register online for the conference as well as signing up for a vinyl record with your child's photo on it as a remembrance of your child. You do **NOT** have to attend the conference to obtain a vinyl record.

TCF Library

We invite you to check out books from our library. We are pleased that you might find a book that may help you or your family. If you have any books you would like to donate to our library that will be great. On the inside front cover of the book please put "Donated in Memory of (Your Child's Name)", and your child's birth and death dates. Also include your name and the date donated.

Newsletter Submissions

If you would like to submit an original poem or a poem of special meaning for you; you can send it to our co-editors Denise Gonzalez and Dick Renner at the following address:

The Compassionate Friends

P.O. Box 25573

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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We Need Not Walk Alone

JUNE 2008

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly invite you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, and support materials.

Please do not be apprehensive about coming to a meeting. Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first meeting, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special chemistry at meetings of The Compassionate Friends.

Come, Let Me Take Your Hand

Come, let me take your hand. For where you must walk, I too, have walked. The road we must walk is not one we would choose to walk; it is a difficult road, full of many obstacles.

Yes, we are still fathers. We love and remember our sons and daughters who have died. Their deaths have left us with a hole in our hearts, and ache in our stomachs, a pain in our chests, and eyes that cannot see as they are filled with tears. We must grieve because we dared to love, and it is through grief that we will recover. We may never have the life that we once had, but we can build another life. Our hearts will heal, our pain will lessen and we will be able to talk about our son or daughter without tears. There will come the day when we dare to laugh again.

*Paul Kinney
TCF, Louisville, KY*