

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Post Office Box 25573 Greenville, South Carolina 29616

(864) 288-9820 www.tcfogreenvillesc.org



August 2008 Meeting

Always the second Thursday of the month

Topic:

A Summary of the TCF National Conference & Sharing Session

Facilitated by:

Dick & Margaret Renner

Meeting Time & Location

7:30 P.M.

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



End of Summer

On the beach. cool breezes blow across the water, but the sun's rays feel warm upon my face. The ocean laps gently at the shore. One golden haired lad I spy with shovel and pail filling the moat around his lovingly constructed sand castle. I remember another golden haired boy of years long past, in his bright red swim suit; busy at his task and oblivious to all around him.

Carefully, patiently, he fills and empties his pail again and again - molding and shaping the sand until he has it just right, until his perfect castle is completed. He runs to me eyes aglow with pride, his dimpled smile stretched from ear to ear. He dances around me. "Mommy, come see - it's finished- it's perfect." We stand and admire it together - one bucket of sand turned down, a tiny trench encircling it. To us it is a perfect castle.

But then it happens. A wave, much bigger than the rest, washes away his labor of love. His green eyes fill, his lip quivers momentarily and then he squares his shoulders and announces, "Oh well, I'll begin again tomorrow." And now, recalling that other sunny summer day, my own eyes brimming with tears, my own lip quivers until I remember that I, too, can square my shoulders and begin again tomorrow.

*Betty Stevens
TCF, Baltimore, MD*

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Going back to school after the death of your brother or sister is very difficult to accept and is a hard thing

to go through. At first there are three groups of people to deal with: people who give you a lot of support, people who don't know what to say, those who give you weird looks and stay away from you.

After a short time changes with each group occur. Those who did not know what to say start or speak or begin to talk. The group who kept away stop ignoring you. The people who gave you a lot of support slowly return to their own affairs. After a while everything goes back to normal and it is over for everyone except you. This makes it very difficult to accept and makes you feel all the more alone.

After a long while the shock for you goes away, and it is then that you need the support of your friends, peers, and teachers. This month is the first anniversary of the death of my brother. Most people will have forgotten, and everything is right with the world. But it is not! Certainly not for my mother and me.

*Jordan Ely
TCF, Albany/Delmar NY*

Yesterdays

I think of my yesterdays
And I can recall,
The days full of wonder
Of when you were small

The laughter, the sweetness
The joy, the all,
The days filled with sunshine
Of when you were small.

Your smile - so wide, your eyes - so large,
And you - not tall,
My days filled with happy thoughts
Of when you were small.

*By Lynn McCurdy—2002
Sadly missed by Mom, Dad and Camissa*

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

Our Children Remembered:

Jennifer (Melissa) Atkinson
Michael Anthony Allen
Kimberly Bennett
Leah Renee Blackstock
David Bridges
Brenda Walker Burnett
Devin Chumley
Robert Garland Davis
Christopher Michael Deviney
Robert Edward Ewing
Holden Ender Gregory
David Johnson
Christopher McLaughlin
Krystal Milwood
Oliva Skye Moser
Jacob Alexander Nicholson
Shane O'Sullivan
Christopher Reeves
Jason P. Satterfield
Tommy Strange, Jr.
Jonathan Trexler
Eric White
Patrick Whitehurst
Donny Wilkinson

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.

We acknowledge the following love gifts with sincere gratitude and deep appreciation in Loving Memory of:

None Received This Month

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, found myself reliving those simpler, happier days of old; longing for them actually. It was a painful time.

Now, if I, whose children were 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 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
Stone Mountain, Georgia



One of the things we have learned in the Compassionate Friends is that there is no magic wand that we can wave which will take away death and stop the pain. While we can accept the kindness and understanding offered by others, in the end it is our pain that we live with and it is we who decide what will become of the pain.

Dennis Klass,
TCF, St. Louis Chapter

TO DATE; ONLY 3 PEOPLE HAVE ENROLLED IN THE BI-LO BOOSTER CLUB. PLEASE CONSIDER ENROLLING

TCF NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

If you are a Bi-Lo shopper with a **BONUS CARD**; you can support TCF by enrolling in the Bi-Lo Booster Club. Greenville TCF qualifies as a non-profit organization for this program, and can earn up to \$3,000 per year.

Why is my support needed? With your donations through the Bi-Lo Booster Club we are able to reach out to bereaved parents, grandparents, step-parents, and siblings with this newsletter, our chapter library, and grief pamphlets. The donations also help to defray our postage costs and other expenditures necessary to keep our chapter in operation.

What is my cost to support TCF? Your **only** cost is the time and effort to have your TCF Bar Code scanned once every school year.

How do I enroll? Simply take your enrollment card (the bar code included in this newsletter) to a Bi-Lo & have it scanned with your BONUSCARD. **You must enroll each school year** by scanning the bar code enrollment card.

When are the enrollment periods? Enrollment opens on July 1st and closes on April 30th. Therefore, May & June are the only months you can NOT enroll in the program. TCF does not earn any money **until you enroll**, so the earlier you enroll, the more money we receive.

Do I have to use the enrollment card bar code each time I shop? No, you only need to use it once every school year.

Do I have to shop at the Bi-lo where I enrolled as a member for my purchases to count for TCF? No. Every Bi-Lo store is a member.

Do you have to be a member of TCF to participate in this program? No. You can give friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc. an enrollment card & TCF will still receive the benefits.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



TCF National Office

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free: 877-969-0010
Fax: 630-990-0246
E-mail:
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website:
www.compassionatefriends.com

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.tcfofgreenvillesc.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.suicidreferencelibrary.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.
www.agast.org - Alliance of Grandparents A Support in Tragedy
www.climb.org - Center for Loss in Multiple Birth
[www.teengrief@newhope-grief.org](mailto:teengrief@newhope-grief.org) - teenage grief web site
www.misschildren.org - mothers in sympathy and support



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
Greenville, SC 29616



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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We Need Not Walk Alone

AUGUST 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.

Thomas McAfee Grief Seminar; Sept. 16, 2008 @ Carolina First Expo Center..... Free to the general public. Registration 5:45-6:45PM with Program from 6:45-9:00PM. The speaker at this seminar is Dr. Therese Rando, a clinical psychologist and the Clinical Director of the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Loss. Dr. Rando is the author of several books on grief and is considered to be a National Media Resource Expert in dying, death, loss, and trauma.

The title of her seminar is ***"Coping With the Loss of a Loved One: How to Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies.*** Her seminar is designed to dispel many harmful but widespread myths about grieving and to provide practical information to enable bereaved persons to better understand and cope with loss of a significant other. There will be a discussion regarding appropriate expectations mourners can have for themselves, the different demands posed by different types of death, and constructive ways of dealing with bereavement distress.

ANGER AT GOD AFTER A CHILD DIES

By The Reverend Al Miles

Many people who suffer the death of a child find themselves feeling angry at God. This anger is sometimes expressed directly: "I'm angry at God for allowing my child to die."

Most often, however, the anger reveals itself in less direct phrases such as, "Why would a loving God allow my child to die?" "Doesn't God have any mercy?" "Where was God when my child experienced so much suffering?" "With all the horrible abuse being done to children by some adults, why did God take the child of loving parents?"

It is important to understand that anger is a normal, healthy part of grief. While not all parents who suffer the death of a child feel angry at God, most will feel this way at someone or something over the long process of grief. The best support we can provide to these individuals is to listen in silence. This will allow them to work through the anger in their own time frame.

Michelle remembers the intense anger she felt at God when her daughter, Robin, died a year after being diagnosed with leukemia. "The depth of my feelings surprised and concerned me," she recalls. "I thought I was losing my mind. Although God was the chief target of my anger, I was also angry at my family, friends and strangers I'd see at the mall with their children. Even the weather affected my mood. When it rained I was angry, and the same was true when the sun shone brightly. And most of my energy was directed at God."

Michelle's anger gradually subsided. She attributes this to the permission she received from her minister to express her feelings during their many pastoral counseling sessions. "Reverend Johnson told me that God could take my anger and still love me as His child," she remembers. "This was very important for me to hear. Many other people tried to defend God, saying that He didn't cause Robin's death. I know they meant well, but I didn't find their efforts helpful at all."

Recently I spoke to a group of hospital chaplains at a medical center in the Los Angeles area. The subject addressed was death and dying. At the beginning of the workshop I showed a videotape of a woman grieving the death of a loved one. The woman said that she was angry at God for allowing her loved one to suffer with cancer for nearly two years before dying.

GRIEVING PEOPLE DON'T NEED THEIR FEELINGS ABOUT GOD STIFLED OR REDIRECTED. GOD CAN HANDLE THE ANGER OF HUMANS WITHOUT OUR DEFENSE OR JUSTIFICATION. ANGER IS A NORMAL, HEALTHY PART OF THE GRIEF PROCESS.

At the conclusion of the video I asked the chaplains how they were going to care for the grief-stricken woman. Several of them replied that their first agenda was to get the woman's "anger off of God."

When I asked why they felt this was necessary one chaplain replied, "Because God didn't cause her loved one to suffer." I then asked the group if they thought that God could handle the anger of one hurting woman-whether or not God caused the suffering? They all agreed that God could.

Mona knows the pain of not only having a child die, but also being told that her anger at God was wrong. Her first child, Jason, died shortly after being born.

"When Jason died," she recalls, "I asked God where was His mercy? It had taken my husband, Tim, and me more than two years to conceive. It didn't make any sense that God would allow our child to die. I was definitely angry at Him." Mona says that many people tried to shift her anger away from God. This was especially the case with her and Tim's minister.

"The first thing my Pastor said," she remembers, "wasn't, 'I'm sorry for your loss,' or some other compassionate words. Instead, he said, 'Mona, God's not to blame. Remember He, too, suffered the death of a child. We simply live in a world where tragedies occur.'"

Mona did not find his words helpful. "I know Pastor was well-meaning," she said. "But he seemed to be more concerned with defending God than caring for Tim and me. Although I continued to be angry at God, I no longer expressed my feelings out loud. Pastor seemed to imply that my anger was misguided or wrong."

Grieving people don't need their feelings about God stifled or redirected. God can handle the anger of humans without our defense or justification. Anger is a normal, healthy part of the grief process. Given the permission to be expressed, it will eventually help bring about healing and a renewed sense of wholeness.

The Reverend Al Miles is the Coordinator of Hospital Ministry with Interfaith Ministries of Hawaii at The Queen's Medical Center.

Grief and the Single Parent

By Jacque Stockhausen, TCF St. Louis MO

The death of a child is an unanticipated, shocking, devastating event in any family. In the single parent home, the death of a child or children can be more difficult than in the two-parent home. Families have a difficult enough time coping with this life passage without the added burden of making arrangements and paying expenses.

When adults have gone through a life crisis like divorce, the stress of dealing with the necessary arrangements presents another barrier on the long road of restructuring the single's life. We may be on speaking terms with the ex-spouse and that is helpful to a point. Those who are not on speaking terms are faced with even greater stress.

The emotional ties that at one time connected us to this lost child are no longer present, yet to many it points to the hurt of the past. Survivors search for something or someone to blame. Widows or widowers are confronted with compounded grief. Unfortunately, most of us do not get through life with only one crisis. Dealing with the past rekindles the hurts of the past.

As parents, we would be well advised by the legal system and counselors to make an effort to be amicable and/or courteous to the ex-spouse; papers must be signed.

Grandparents, siblings, relatives and friends are also in grief. We must deal with them all. Who can our remaining children turn to if not us for guidance through these crises?

If you have a companion who has suffered this loss, be patient. If you are the parent who has lost a child, ask your companion to be patient with you. The grief process is longer than we knew it would be. To the non-bereaved parent, the grief process is longer than you can know.

This life passage is not something we want for any of you. The death of a marriage is not comparable to the death of a child. Often the widow or widower or the divorced person may remarry. The loss of a child is not a void which can be filled. There are entirely different emotions to be dealt with. Many of us survive but will forever have emotional scars. Stand by us and we will be forever grateful.

WHY ME? -The Unanswerable Question



Polly Moore - TCF, Nashville, TN

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

Dear Compassionate Friend,

We are required by law to have a consent form on file in order to publish your child's name in our monthly newsletter. According to our records, we do not have one on file from you.

If you would like to have your child's name to appear in the "Our Children Remembered" column of our newsletter, please complete the information below and mail back to our editor at the address below:

Richard Renner
The Compassionate Friends
313 Lexington Place Way
Greenville, SC 29615

Please continue to send the monthly newsletter and remember my child in the "Our Children Remembered" column.

YOUR NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CHILD'S NAME: _____

BIRTHDATE: _____

DEATH DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____