



The Compassionate Friends Fayetteville Area Chapter

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A Personal Evolution Through Grief



I have been a bereaved parent now for three and half years. I have learned a few things during that time, and I have much to learn in the future. I am evolving. Evolving from what I once was.....a person who had reasonable expectations of a life that included my son, his children, graduations, holidays, birthdays and special occasions. Now I have become a person who has virtually no expectations that are similar to the ones I had before my son died.

I have evolved into a more sensitive person. I know what some people are thinking before they even say the words. I feel others' joy as if it were my own. I cheer for the success of others. I feel their

sorrow, their failures, their missteps. I watch children play and remember my childhood, my son's childhood and I think of the joy that is childhood. I sit for hours watching birds at our feeders, marveling at the beauty of the natural world.

I have slowed down the pace. I no longer feel the pressure to be here or there, to do this or that, to call this one or that one, to wear certain clothes, to "put on the best face" for strangers. I have liberated myself from the mundane and the materialistic. Instead, I simply feel deeply about others. I have become extremely sensitive to all that surrounds me.

I believe the loss of my child has changed me in many different ways. I see this in the attitudes of those who are in the Compassionate Friends as well. While few of us will broach no nonsense in our lives because it is meaningless compared with our experiences, we will listen intently for long periods to the weeping,

hysterical cries of a newly bereaved mother. Or we will nod quietly as a parent who is far into grief has a sudden flash of sorrow that is overwhelming. We have a heightened sensitivity to others through no choice of our own. It came with the loss of our beautiful children.

I wonder about what my son would think of events that have unfolded since his death. I have come to conclusions about others that aren't, quite frankly, flattering. Yet, he had come to these conclusions before he died. While I tried to mollify his perception of the dysfunctional people with whom he was burdened, he just said, "that's how it is, mom." And he was right. That's how it is. I have learned to accept people for what they are. If I can help, I will certainly do so. If I can't help, I accept that some things can't be changed, and some people won't change. There is no magic here. It's a simple fact of life. "That's how it is, mom."

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Our Quarterly News



A number of people from our chapter are already planning to attend the National Conference in July. There will be two days of workshops on every aspect of grief that you can imagine, sharing sessions, keynote speakers, candle lighting service, a walk, book store, butterfly boutique, unbelievable support and much, much more. For complete details go to www.compassionatefriends.org. I will be displaying pictures of our children on the memory board at the conference. Last year I posted 60 pictures of our angels. If you would like your child's picture included, contact me at jojegerman@outlook.com or (910) 245-3177.

Jennifer German

Our Credo

We need not walk alone.
We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love,
With understanding, and with hope.
The children we mourn have died at
All ages and from many different
Causes, but our love for them unites
us.

Your pain becomes my pain
Just as your hope becomes my hope.
We come together from all walks of
life,

from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because
We represent many races, creeds and
relationships.

We are young, and we are old.
Some of us are far along in our grief,
But others still feel a grief so fresh
And so intensely painful
That we feel helpless and see no
hope.

Some of us have found our faith
To be a source of strength;
While some of us are struggling to find
answers.

Some of us are angry,
Filled with guilt or in deep depression;
While others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring
To this gathering of
The Compassionate Friends,
It is pain we will share

Just as we share with each other
Our love for the children who have
died.

We are all seeking and struggling
To build a future for ourselves,
But we are committed to
Building that future together
We reach out to each other in love
to share the pain as well as the joy,
Share the anger as well as the peace,
Share the faith as well as the doubts
And help each other to grieve
As well as to grow.

We need not walk alone....

We are The Compassionate Friends.

Continued from page 1

I volunteer more these days. I give of myself, my knowledge, any wisdom I may have acquired on life's path to others who are in need. I give of my time, my talents and my labors to those who don't ask as well as those who do. I am comfortable with this.

I have less appreciation for money than I once had. Perhaps that is the best thing to come out of this. What was I chasing? What was my son chasing? What was the point? Bigger, better, faster, farther, more, more, more.

It's a shallow existence when one is so focused on the material things that one is defined by materialism. I have learned to let go of preconceptions, and in that letting go, I have been pleasantly surprised by many people.

How did I get to this place? One minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month at a time. It is a slow journey from crawling through the pits of hell in deep grief to coming back to the reality of here and now. It's as close to a near death experience as I can imagine. Instead of great epiphanies, there are moments of clarity. Instead of instant gratification, there is much work to achieve tiny steps forward. But the effort is well worth making. When I came out from the pits of hell, I realized that my reality was changed; I realized that I was a different person. I discovered that the world doesn't run on the dollar. I found that all people have a capacity for goodness, but that many will never use this capacity.

But most importantly, I discovered that after leaving the pits of hell, there is a road toward hope that is traveled by each of us. Some walk more quickly, some more slowly. But we each walk that road to hope. Hope represents a life that is tolerable once again. Hope represents the acceptance of our child's death and the acknowledgment that we will keep our children alive in our hearts for all eternity as we continue into our tomorrows. Hope is reconciling those two elements: yesterday and tomorrow.

I have learned to adjust to change, because change is inevitable. I have learned to stand up for what is right because that is our duty as human beings. I have learned much about the fears of others and even more about my own fears. I have conquered my phobias as a result of my son's death. Nothing my imagination could conjure would equal that gripping pain, the ache that hangs in my heart forever because my child has died.

But most of all, I have learned that my son was right. "That's the way it is, mom." Shortly before he died, he said he wanted to give me a copy of *Who Moved My Cheese?* He never had the opportunity. But I will read it. I have a feeling I know what it will say. Perhaps Todd gave me the plot line when he died. I'd like to think that he was subconsciously preparing me.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

*Sibling Walking
Together*

(Formerly The Sibling Credo)

We are the
surviving children of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the
death of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us. But have
patience with us.
Sometimes we need the support of
our friends.

At other times we need our families
to be there.

Sometimes we feel we must walk
alone, taking our memories with us,
continuing to become the individuals
we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or
sister; however, a special part of
them lives on with us.

When our brothers and
sisters died, our lives changed.
We are living a life very different
from what we envisioned, and we
feel the responsibility to be strong
even when we feel weak.

Yet, we can go on because we
understand better than many others
the value of family and the precious
gift of life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten
mourners that we sometimes are,
but to walk together to face our
tomorrows
as surviving children
of
The Compassionate
Friends.

We were put on this earth

To love them

for as long as **WE** live....

not for as long as

THEY lived.

-Alan Pedersen-

I Am Your Sister and Always Will Be

"I am your sister and always will be." That's how Susie signed her cards to me. After a while, she shortened it to, "I am..." And of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and one-half years younger than I. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found. Whatever it was--it ended her life and changed mine forever.

There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn't pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a good mood, her smiles warmed my heart. Yet I spent most of my life wishing that things were different: wishing that she thought more of herself, wishing that she would take my advice, wishing that she were happier, wishing that we could accept each other.

Now, for two years, I've done nothing but wish she were here so we could have another chance to work at our relationship. Now, I wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love & support. (She needed it and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been alone. Now, I wish that I would have held her in my arms and told her how very much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister and always will be.

Michele Walters
TCF Baltimore, MD
In Memory of my sister, Susie

(This is a Sibling Story) It's a Family Affair

When a child dies, grief is a family affair. It hits mom, dad, and siblings with equal despair. Mom cries and cannot get out of bed. Dad holds in emotions and leaves much unsaid. Sister and brother simply cannot understand why death came and dealt this kind of hand. No one acts as they should and nothing is the same. The family wants to draw together but seems to only share pain. Someone must be responsible when a child dies. Each family member thinks in some way it's them, and cries.

But no one is responsible for things we cannot control. So reach out to each other and keep the family whole.

Don't let the differences in how each grieve change the love in your family or its belief. Be strong when you can and weak when you must, and love each other with kindness and trust. So treat the family with love and you will survive. For we who have been there and made it through together can say that holding on to each other makes love last forever.

Jackie Roxen
TCF, Broward, FL



40TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. The 2017 Conference will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. For more information visit the national website at <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>



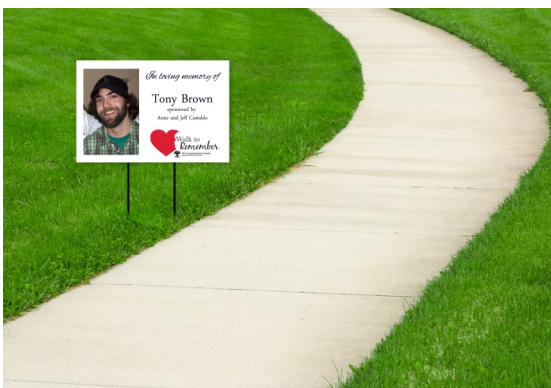
JULY 30

The Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember® is a highlight of every TCF National Conference. It was created as a symbolic way to show the love we carry for the children we mourn. Held at 9 a.m. Sunday on the final day of the national conference

it starts at the host hotel of the conference. There is an air of anticipation and excitement as everyone gathers in preparation for the start of the Walk. Finally the Walk begins and, hand-in-hand everyone walks, meditating on a much different time in their lives. Since its inception in 2000, the Walk to Remember has taken on many distinctive facets. There is the main Walk to Remember where those attending the conference join with local bereaved families and others who fly in from across the country just for the Walk. As many as 1400 have participated. Some go the full distance while others only walk a short way knowing that in participating, they are remembering. Special Walk to Remember t-shirts are given to all who register, as well as walk bibs where the names of the children being remembered can be written.

Please note: Registration is required to participate in TCF national Walks to Remember. Those under 9 are not required to register but still must have a waiver of liability signed for them by a participating parent or guardian. For registration information visit the national website at <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

Sponsor a Walk to Remember Sign



These signs will be posted along the Walk to Remember route with your child's/grandchild's/sibling's photo and name. **Price: \$50.00.** If you purchase a sign and are not attending the conference, contact Jennifer German at 910-245-3177 or email: jojegerman@outlook.com to have the sign brought to you from Florida.



Love Gifts



A Love Gift is a donation to honor a child who has died, or as a memorial for a relative or friend.

The Compassionate Friends depends entirely on voluntary contributions from individuals and organizations to meet chapter expenses. TCF is a 504(c)(3) non-profit organization: all donations are tax deductible. 100% of every dollar donated goes toward chapter expenses.

We thank the following for their kind generosity, love and sharing. There are no dues. We have already paid the ultimate price to be a member.

Inga Hondros in memory of her son Christopher "Chris" Hondros

Joann Cowles in memory of her niece Erica Graham

If you wish to make a donation or a love gift, please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends, and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394. Please include the name of the child, love one, or friend that you wish the donation to be made in memory or honor of.

MEETINGS

First Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm
April and May meetings will be held in room 224 of the General Class Building at Fayetteville Technical Community College. 2817 Ft. Bragg Road, Fayetteville, NC 28303 (across the street from the Barbeque Hut).

Current meeting location and information will always be posted on our website www.tcffayetteville.org

Contact Jennifer German at (910) 245-3177 or jojegerman@outlook.com if you have any questions.



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

The National Office of The Compassionate Friends
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Web Site: www.compassionatefriends.org Toll free: 877-969-0010

Regional Coordinator for the Fayetteville Area Chapter of TCF

Donna & Ralph Goodrich
704-822-4503 or iluvu2lauren@gmail.com



Mother's Day

Mother's Day.....a time set aside to honor each mother's role in her child's life.....is often dreaded by bereaved parents. This holiday, like Father's day, is dedicated strictly to us, as parents. Other holidays differ from this one. That difference, which once was so meaningful to us as parents, is now a poignant reminder of all that once was and will never be again.

Bereaved mothers often approach this holiday with much anxiety. Yet, the holiday itself is generally not as difficult as the ramp-up to it. There are television specials, movies, commercials, signs in stores and advertising everywhere we look.....all of which remind us that our children are no longer with us. This is a difficult time for many bereaved mothers-difficult but not insurmountable.

During the month before the second Mother's Day without my son, I realized that it was my perspective that was the problem. I understood that the world was going to continue to spin, the commercialism would build and the reminders would increase until the holiday arrived. I could either ignore the advertisements through my superb channel surfing skills or I could watch them and torture myself. Passing up print ads was simple....I scanned right past them in the newspaper, and I put the mailings in the trash without comment. Each time I actively said "no" to these reminders, I became a little stronger.

As the week before Mother's Day crawled to a close, I thought I had it aced. Then came Mother's Day. My husband gave me a card and a gift. That was it. The gift and card were both lovely and sweet. My husband cried. I cried. Then we settled down and read the Sunday paper. We had both agreed that we would stop protracting the self-torture and live in the moment. Since I was keeping Mother's Day in my heart, the celebrations and thoughts and sales projections of others mattered not. I keep Mother's Day as I choose.

Each of us must work at developing coping skills. Logic is the choice for some. Setting boundaries works for others. Some parents choose to go with their emotions. The decision to celebrate a holiday and the level of the celebration is a choice unique to each parent. We cannot allow others to set our agenda. Mother's Day is the singular holiday which serves to reinforce that I am forever Todd's mom. My child lived, loved and laughed with us, and this holiday brings deep, beautiful memories of that time. I choose to keep those sweet memories of my son in my heart. Making that decision was one more emotional choice in my grief work. Letting go of what was, living in the moment and cherishing my child forever.....all of these have helped me to find an ever brightening light of hope.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my Son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

*We quickly find there are no words to describe
the experience of losing a child.
For those who have not lost a child,
no explanation will do.
For those who have,
no explanation is necessary.*

~ Mary Lingle



Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husband's this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes
TCF Cincinnati, OH

*An important way to cope with grief is having an outlet,
be it interpersonal, be it artistic, that will allow you to not have to
contain your grief, but will give you an opportunity to express it,
to externalize it to some degree.*

~ R. Benjamin Cirlin, Grief counselor

Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Birthday's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:

April

Joey Jackson April 1
 Erran Dawson April 5
 Christine Gable Powell April 8
 Dustin Nerren April 10
 Anthony "Brian" Smith April 10
 Ralph Lanier April 14
 Chris Eggleston April 15
 Amy Zinsser April 21
 Izhia Kraut April 23
 Scott Tyree April 26
 Andrew Beutelspacher April 29

May

Gregory Lovings May 7
 Allison Bennett May 8
 Thomas Payne Hollers May 22
 Michael Cline May 28



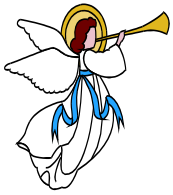
June

Michael Pizzarella June 5
 Amy Elizabeth German June 8
 Christopher Hrvoj June 8
 Melissa Thornton June 16
 Christopher Ortega June 20
 James "Randy" Smith June 25

Happy Birthday in Heaven

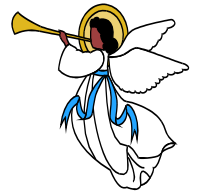
Today we remember the day we were
 blessed with your birth.
 How wonderful to have your life to share up-
 on this earth.
 Too few birthdays you spent with us, now an-
 other in heaven.
 We wonder what our lives would be if you
 were still here in them.
 But sadly it is not our fate to spend our days
 with you.
 So we will cherish our memories to help see
 us through.
 Our memories of your smile, compassionate,
 generous ways,
 The joy you brought to all you saw each and
 every day.
 Oh Son how we wish so bad we could be to-
 gether,
 But always know we love you today, tomor-
 row and forever.
 Happy Birthday precious angel, may your
 spirit soar above,
 Mom, Dad, Sister, family and friends sending
 all our love.

Cindy McClain
 TCF of the Wabash Valley, IN
 In Memory of my son Dylan



Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Angel Date's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:



April

Christine Gable Powell April 5

Spencer Walden April 5

Michael Cline April 9

Manzonian Hall April 9

Glenda Hudson April 16

Ian Redshaw April 18

Christopher "Chris" Hondros April 20

Izhia Kraut April 23

Lamont Saffore April 24

May

Hope Parker May 15

Derrell Lee Dean May 17

Thomas Payne Hollers May 22

Lexi Minyon May 25

Christine Bailey May 25

Amber Marie Hall May 26

Robert Stevens May 28



June

Chris Eggleston June 2

Querokee Vélez June 4

Randy Lee Dalton June 22

Keith Parker June 22

Timothy Bowman June 22

Wayne Tyner, Jr. June 26

Joey Jackson June 29

THE ANNIVERSARY

Let me be sad today,
Give me this day to mourn.
It's the date my little son died,
And also the date he was born.

Let me think back to his birth
The fear of viewing him, dead.
Memories of holding him close,
And cradling his little head.

Allow me to visit his grave,
To let a few balloons go,
To place flowers lovingly,
And trim the grass that does grow.

Allow me tears to cry,
Love fills my heart to the brim
Spilling it on those close by.
While always longing for him

Elizabeth Dent
TCF McMinnville, OR

The Compassionate Friends
Fayetteville Area Chapter
703 Rosebud Court,
Vass NC 28394



The Compassionate Friends
Fayetteville Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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John German.....(910) 245-3177

We're on the Web
www.tcffayetteville.org

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Love Gifts

There is no charge for our newsletter, meetings, or lending library, and we depend solely on your contributions. Love gifts can be made in memory of your child, grandchild, or sibling. Your love gift will insure that all who need our newsletter, will receive it.

I wish to make a donation in memory of _____

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Donated by _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

If you would like to make a donation please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends,
and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394

Please send form with check. **A donation is not required to submit items for the newsletter.**