



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



March



April



May



WELCOME TO THE SPRING MEETINGS

Date: Wednesday Evenings
March 25, 2009
April 29, 2009
May 27, 2009

Program:

Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Place:

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1000 Montana Avenue
El Paso, Texas

Board of Directors:

Chairperson: Susan Crews
542-0908

Meeting Facilitator: Susan Crews

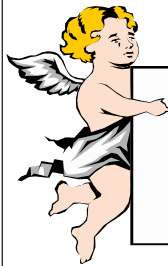
Treasurer: Lou Cain

Newsletter, Website & Mailings:
The Winkelmans

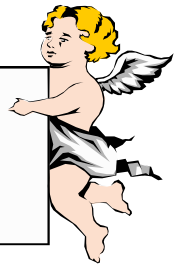
Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

June 24: Regular Meeting
July 29: Regular Meeting
Aug 26: Regular Meeting

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a self help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purpose of TCF is to aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of their child and to foster the physical and emotional health of bereaved parents and surviving children. The El Paso chapter meets in donated church facilities, but no religious creed or affiliation is involved. There are no dues and no one is required to talk at any meeting. Listening is okay! Please join us, together we can make it.



Editor's Notes



We want this newsletter to be *your* newsletter. To do that, we need your help. You are invited – actually, you are strongly encouraged – to contribute to this publication. If you have something to share with other bereaved parents, e-mail it to me so that it can be published in our next newsletter. Please write and share your stories of your child or your sibling. Some of us get to know each other's children through the monthly chapter meetings. But, this newsletter also can be a forum for us to share. Writing is a form of therapy. It will help us get to know each other a little better and it will help us to heal a bit, too. We all have favorite memories that we can share – things that have helped us over the days, months or years. I hope you'll share them with us. It doesn't even have to be a full article. Sometimes, brief paragraphs of memories or thoughts are perfect.

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GRIEF IS BLACK; HEALING IS COLOR



Coloring Easter eggs was always one of my favorite times. Boiling the eggs, setting out the glasses, adding the vinegar, plopping in the fizzy tablets and then slowly lowering (or sometimes dropping) the eggs into the colors bring back good memories with my kids. Every time we did it, one of them wanted to drop at least one egg (sometimes more) into all the colors. Are some of you flashing back to those fun times? As we went from yellow to orange to blue to red to green to purple and into whatever else was left, and then back again, the egg took on a dark, ugly brownish, almost black color. If for some reason the egg cracked along the way and we peeled it later, the egg looked rotten. It was entertainment to them; it was disgusting to me.

When our kids were alive, they were our glasses filled with color. They were our fizzy tablets of fun. Their lives were vibrant and beautiful. We didn't pass them from glass to glass and change their color; we left them just as they were. You probably have a favorite color and maybe even associate a color with your child. Friends of mine have a son, Fabian (or "Fabulous Fabian" as we know him) who died as a little boy. Fabian is all about the color blue, so they celebrate his life with that color. On his birth and death days, I've sent them a blue crayon, blue paint samples from the hardware store and a string of blue paper clips. They're very appreciative of my simple gifts. It helps brighten their day and reminds them of their colorful, beautiful Fabulous Fabian. As we all know, the instant we found out our kids had died, all the color drained from our lives. No more bright reds, pinks or yellows of our daughters. No more blues, greens or oranges of our sons. Instead, our lives filled with black. The black of death; the black of grief. Nothing shined anymore; there was no glitter or sparkle. In the additive process of color in painting or printing inks, (or Easter egg coloring) black is the combination of all colors. So, when our kids died and their colors went away, they went into the blackness of our grief. They weren't chased away by our grief; they were consumed in it.

The colors of the lives of our kids can live inside our grief, but more importantly, they can live inside our healing. Every red, blue, orange, green, yellow, magenta and purple child who was created, still lives in those colors, but they can be buried in our grief. The question is, how do we break open our grief and release the colors of our children? How do we get to their colorful lives and bring them back to us? That's where grief work comes in. Or, as I call it, healing work. As we grieve, we heal, but if we don't do our work, it makes it much harder to heal. It's through our work that our colorful children can return; not in the way we want them to return, back in our arms, but in the best possible way we can let them return.

What can we do to rediscover the beauty and color of our children? The other day, I was talking with a group of fellow travelers and the discussion was about memories. For many, the memories really, really hurt because they associated those memories with a child who had died. That's suffering we all know when our kids die. Each memory is a painful reminder that our children will not be back to make more. Our child's life force or soul or spirit (whatever you may call it) also came up in the discussion. It's the child we think of when we put our heads on our pillows at night. It's the feeling we get when we think about their energy, their aura and their wonderfulness.

We also talked about love. The newly bereaved added the "ed" on the end of the word. "I lovED my child so much." That's fine, that's what we all do in the beginning because the death of our child is an ending. They're gone, they're now part of the past. I did the same after my son, Brendon, died. "Brendon "was" my wonderful son. I loved him very much," is what I said, too. At that time I thought I would never again have him in my life in any way, shape or form. I now know differently.

As the discussion about death and grief continued, I threw this out, "It's impossible to have a memory of someone who never lived. We can't have fond remembrances of a child who was never created. Our memories are of the living, the colorful, beautiful living, not of the dead."

"Hmmm," I heard a few people say. I went on. "It's called a 'life force' for a reason. There can't be a life force without a life, right? Our kids have created that wonderful feeling in us because of the beauty of their colorful lives. I've never heard of someone having a death force, only a life force."

"Hmmm," I heard a few more people say. I finished with, "We can't love what we've never known. We can't love someone who never lived, no matter how long or short that was. Our love is because of the lives of our kids. That's why it hurts so much, because we love them so much. We love their colorful lives and want them back."

"Hmmm," I heard the rest of them say. As much as the deaths of our kids have crushed us and swallowed the color of their lives (and ours too), that color still lives within us through our memories, their life force and most importantly, our love. If we allow grief to keep our colorful children, then grief wins, and that's just not acceptable. We can't let the black of our grief swallow up their color. We must fight for them; fight for the lives of our children. If we do, we can once again live a joyful life of yellows, blues, greens, purples, oranges and all the other beautiful colors of our kids. When the colorful lives of our children re-enter our lives, we will smile a smile as big and broad and beautiful as theirs were.

By Rob Anderson - ~reprinted with permission from Grief Digest, Centering Corporation, Omaha, NE

March's Children Remembered

If your child's name has been left out of this section, or there is missing/incorrect information, please contact me immediately so I can update our data base. Register your child at the El Paso Compassionate Friends website at elpasotcf.org

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Date:	Child's Name:	Age:	Parents:
3/12/09	Diego	5 Mo.	Son of Francisco & Marcela Zubiante
3/14/07	Yvonne Pixler	38	Daughter of Gloria & Esiquio Trujillo
3/18/93	Robert Todd	23	Son of Mary Lou Cain
3/27/59	Dennis	NB	Son of Carol Winkelman
3/31/95	David Fox	18	Son of Nina Turley
3/31/08	Aaron	17	Son of Sibrena Sinagal

SPRING THAWS THE WOUNDED HEART

That first Spring
came too soon.
Why did daffodils
show sunny faces
around the gravestone?
Why did warm breezes blow
clouds away?
My world, cold, gray, dismal,
had no room
for this season.
Now years later
the blossoms of love,
hope and healing
have broken through
grounds of utter despair,
warmed by memories of you
I join the daffodils
bringing my own smile
—Alice J. Wisler,
mother of Daniel

DAYDREAMS

Once a day and sometimes more
You knock upon my daydream door.
And I say warmly come right in
I'm glad you're here with me again.

Then we sit down and have a chat
Recalling this, discussing that
Until some task that I must do
Forces me away from you.

Reluctantly, I say good-by
Smiling with a little sigh
For though my daydreams bring you near
I wish that you were really here.

But what reality cannot change
My dreams and wishes can arrange
And through my wishing you'll be brought
To me each day; A happy thought.

—Stephen A. Wright
TCF, Champaign-Urbana, IL

April's Children Remembered

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LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Date:	Child:	Age:	Parent:
4/20/97	Richard	30	Son of Mary Windham
4/29/94	Matthew	4	Son of Eric and Patsy Winkelman

TAKE THIS THREAD

Take this thread
Of hope
And let it be
A new beginning -
A thread in the new fabric of life
You must now weave.
Choose your colour:
You have known the blues
And sunk deep into them
Yet also known the calming
Of a cloudless sky
You have known the reds
Sublime sunsets
Flashes of anger
Flames of passion
What about green?
You have known the gentle cushion
The balmy restfulness
Of a grassy verge
Known also the green-eyed monster
Jealous of those who still have
What you have lost.
You have seen the sunny yellows
Absent for a while now
Overtaken by the grey

Choose these threads of hope
Draw them together;
Take the positives
Turn the grays to silver.
Remember how it was
And know you will
Once again, some time,
Come to that place of harmony.
But first choose your threads carefully
And much later
Much stitching later
Weaving, working
After much hard work,
Love and care
Your fabric will glow again
A different fabric
For it can never
Be the same
But it will be beautiful
A new form of beautiful.
© Carolyn Salter,
TCF Walcha New South Wales



May's Children Remembered

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LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Dates:	Child's Name:	Age:	Parent's Name:
5/11/04	Christopher	19	Son of Colleen Lydon
5/18/04	Aylssa	15 Months	Daughter of Desiree and Hugo Villanueva
5/30/04	Anthony	20	Son of Richard and Sylvia Chacon

A PATCH OF BLUE

Today is a beautiful spring day in Minnesota. I welcome being able to sit on my deck barefoot and in short sleeves, feeling a warm gentle breeze on my face, listening to robins singing their sweet springtime song, and breathing in the clean fresh air of the season. I watch the brilliant sun come and go as puffy white clouds race through the azure sky oftentimes blocking its light. My time on the deck is my private time for contemplation over all that was and all that is.

In two weeks, it will be 12 years since my Nina left this earth. During most of that period of time, spring brought with it trepidation and feelings of loss and emptiness. There is an uneasiness that has not been completely erased. Whether it is the smell of the air or the look to the sky, it brings me back to the most horrific day of my life.

Yet, I have come so far. I remember the "all-nighters" in early grief that my daughter Amy and I pulled; we stayed up all night, talked and cried, until the sun came up. It was easier to stay awake all night than to wake up to the painful realization each morning that Nina was truly gone. That I would never again begin my day seeing her sitting at the breakfast table with the daily newspaper and her bowl of Rice Chex, and her always cheerful greeting, "Good morning, Mommy!" with her ever ready smile. I would never again feel the warmth of her hugs as she snuck up behind me while I was working at my desk, wrapping her arms around my neck with a kiss on the top of my head, as was her goodnight ritual. I began my day with a deluge of tears, and ended the same way. My life was a never-ending blur of anguish and sorrow.

Some years, we may sail through these grief days; for example, the upcoming Mother's and Father's Day, days that almost scream out the reminder that one is missing. We wondered where we got

the strength to make it through, but somehow we did. On the other hand, perhaps the following year we may feel like we have regressed to Square One. Often it is grief triggers that set it off; you may have seen someone who reminded you of your child, sibling or grandchild – the way they tilted their head when they spoke, the scent of their cologne, or even the way they walked. However, oftentimes there is usually neither rhyme nor reason to why it happens; it just does. Such is the roller-coaster ride of grief. Rather than panic when we feel we have gone backwards, we have come to know that it is part of our "new normal". Whether it was from attending TCF meetings and listening to other more seasoned grievers, or reading from the newsletter, we have found that we are not alone in these thoughts and feelings. Time is a friend. I will not go so far as to say that overused phrase, that "time heals all wounds". But, I can say that the pain of our loss will become gentler with time. We will have had practice, and learned how to live with the missing and the longing. When someone has had such a profound loss, we can expect to have "shadow grief"; yet, we are aware of its existence and have learned to deal with it and not be frightened that we are going backwards. Today's lovely spring sky that I wrote of earlier is now filled with dark clouds. However, periodically, there will be a break in them revealing a patch of blue sky. I knew I had found my "patch of blue", a break from the grayness in my life, when I found myself commenting on and enjoying the gorgeous spring days those years before I dreaded.

May a "patch of blue" in a cloudy sky remind you that, in time, the dark clouds will lessen and the sun will most surely shine through again, returning too much of its former beauty. May you hold tight to that "patch of blue", knowing that your grief will be gentler, and you will survive. With gentle thoughts,

- Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN

When Mother's Day Feels Empty

There are no words to completely describe what a mother feels when her child has died. She feels lost, abandoned, afraid, lonely, forgotten, and most of all empty . The emptiness is like none other because it is an emptiness of the heart. When a child dies, part of a mother's heart also dies.

Mother's Day is a traditional holiday that has grown bigger and bigger throughout the years. We are bombarded with advertisements to take out mothers for a special dinner or buy Mother's Day flowers. For more than a month before Mother's Day, reminders are placed everywhere. It's impossible to pick up a newspaper, listen to the radio, or turn on the television without some kind of reminder of Mother's Day.

There are Mother's Day banquets, Mother's Day baby dedications at church and special family gatherings to honor mothers. All of this is wonderful except for the mother that is grieving the loss of her child. For the grieving mother, every reminder of Mother's Day is like another wound to the heart . The hole in her heart caused by grief grows larger and larger with each reminder, and the emptiness feels darker and colder than she ever imagined possible. What is a grieving mother to do when there are so many reminders of the precious child she has lost?

Mother's Day is the only holiday that specifically uses the word mother, so there is no real way of avoiding this day. A grieving mother can, however, prepare for Mother's Day well in advance so that she knows how to avoid placing additional pain in her life.

Remember that Mother's Day is not a holiday that has to be celebrated. If a grieving mother does not want to attend a banquet, or watch baby dedications at church, or see special family gatherings at restaurants, then she has the right to choose not to participate in these events without feeling guilty. Many mothers choose to stay home and do nothing special at all on Mother's Day, and that is fine. Grief follows no rules and there is no right or wrong way to grieve .

Explain to others that this day is painful. Giving yourself permission to grieve in your own way is very healing and helpful, especially during such a difficult day as Mother's Day.

Do what feels right for you. Maybe that means taking a mini trip away where nobody knows you. Maybe it is staying at home. Perhaps a walk in the woods or a walk along the sandy beach would help you during this empty time . Journal your thoughts. Release a balloon. Or, maybe you want to avoid Mother's Day altogether. You know what feels best for your heart, and giving yourself permission to do what is right for you can be the most healing thing of all .

Lastly, remind yourself often that you will not always feel this empty . With each passing day new hope will enter your empty heart until one day you will wake up to realize that the empty hole is beginning to fill with some joy. Mother's Day is only one day. With a little bit of preparation you can make it through, and you will have walked one more step in your journey of healing!

-Clara Hinton



FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

I watched the flag pass by one day.
It fluttered in the breeze
A young Marine saluted it, and then
He stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform
so young, so tall, so proud
With hair cut square and eyes alert
He'd stand out in any crowd.

I thought, how many men like him
Had fallen through the years?
How many died on foreign soil?
How many mothers' tears?
How many Pilots' planes shot down?
How many foxholes were soldiers'
graves?

No, Freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of taps one night,
When everything was still.

I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times
That taps had meant "Amen"
When a flag had draped a coffin
of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
With interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard
at the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington.

No, Freedom isn't free!!

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ON MEMORIAL DAY,

along with our
own loved ones, we will also
remember those who have died while
serving our country, now and in the
past, as well as the mothers &
fathers, sisters & brothers, and
grandparents who were left behind
to grieve. We pray that peace comes
to our world very soon.

Memorial Day is Monday, May 25th

Love Gifts

A LOVE GIFT is a gift of money or service to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died but it can also be a gift to help in the work of the El Paso Chapter of TCF. Your gifts are tax deductible and are our Chapter's only monetary support. Your donation will help us pay for postage and labels for sending our newsletter each month.

LOVE GIFT

Name of Person to be Remembered _____

Special Occasion of Person _____

Given By _____

Send To: Mary Lou Cain
5664 Beth View
El Paso, TX 79932

Love Gifts For Spring

Carol Winkelman, In memory of her son Dennis 3/27/59, and her grandson Matthew's Anniversary, April 29

GRIEVING TWICE

(grief from a grandparent's perspective)

When a grandchild dies, grandparents who are experiencing their own sorrow also must witness the agony of their own child. It's a double whammy - two heartaches at once. And in both, they feel powerless. At the same time, they feel the need to be strong for their child.

The primary concern of grieving grandparents is usually their own child. Parents of bereaved parents dig deep into their years of experience to pull out added strength— their own powerful grief must be secondary to the pain of their child. So the grandparent plays out the role that's expected of them and often that means dealing with their own grief in private. Friends and family may forget that the grandparent is also grieving—often grandparents don't even receive sympathy cards.

There is such a feeling of helplessness and frustration—a parent wants to be able to "fix" everything just as they did when their child was small and came to them with a skinned knee or with a broken toy or was in need of help with a math problem. But this problem can't be "fixed" - all the parent can do is be there for their child. And yet that is the most valuable gift that can be given a child who has now taken on the role of "bereaved parent." Being there to listen and keeping an open heart is so important to both parties. The grieving parent will open up or ask for advice or support when they are ready, not necessarily when grandma or grandpa thinks the time is right. Patience and understanding are so vital to maintaining a healthy relationship with a bereaved child.

A newly bereaved parent may express the need to change or adjust "traditional" family and holiday celebrations. In fact, they may choose to not be present for some gatherings - flexibility in accepting their wishes is also essential to the healing process. Grandparents may feel slighted and think that hurt feelings are present.

Again, remember that respecting their wishes and showing great patience provides the best support possible during difficult times. And with the passing of time and an ability to adapt and accept, it will once again someday feel more "normal" for all.

- Linda Bergan, bereaved mother of Derek and grandmother of Lawson, TCF/St. Paul Chapter

SPRING - A TIME TO GROW

After the snow, sleet and ice of winter, spring is a welcome season and one of new beginnings. If you are like me, there is a feeling of elation as the sun slowly warms the earth. I eagerly search for the first buds. Perhaps it is a tree groaning with sap, sending new life to the branches or a tulip leaf bravely searching for warmth as it peeks above ground, but when it happens, I rejoice. Spring is here!

Now is the time to come out of hibernation, buy seeds, prune vines, and start afresh. This is symbolic of our lives, after we come through a period of winter in which loneliness and heartache plagued or stagnated us, we cherish each new glow of warmth. Or perhaps the winter of your life has been a time of contemplation and rest in which you felt you could catch your breath and relax. Whatever way we view the wintertime of life, spring will come. New relationships develop projects that have overwhelmed us before we now have the energy and courage to begin. Volunteer work, making new friends, swimming, golf, tennis among other activities are all ways we can use to break the barrier that kept us immune to the rest of society in "our wintertime."

However spring may come, it requires work, and it is no different with our grief. In order to function again we need to break the soil, smooth out the rough spots and fertilize in order to see new growth. At times this may cause more hurt, but remember, just as in the garden, we will not see growth without special effort on our part; so it is in our lives. We need to cultivate and weed to encourage a healthy garden. The areas, which need fertilization, get special care, while other areas seem to grow smoothly without effort on our part. As we rejoice in the spring of the year, and in each new bud that appears, lets appreciate the good moments, and when hard or stagnant times come, affirm one another in love and share each other's joys and burdens.

Happy gardening to you all!
by **Lorraine Weaver**
Anne Arundel County, Md



Self Help Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parent

Address Correction Requested



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