



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



March



April



May



WELCOME TO THE SPRING MEETINGS

Date: Wednesday Evenings
March 30
April 27
May 26

Program:

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

Place:

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

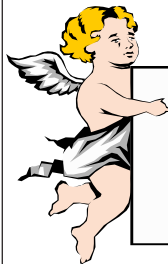
Board of Directors:

Chairperson: Robert Gallardo
Facilitator: Susan Crews
Treasurer: Lou Cain
Newsletter, Website & Mailings:
The Winkelmans

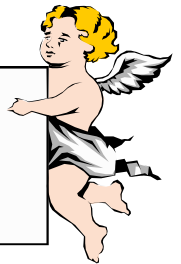
Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

June 29: Regular Meeting
July 27: Regular Meeting
Aug 30: 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



The El Paso Compassionate Friends on Saturday March 12, 2011, held our first fundraiser rummage sale at the church, with the help, cooperation and donations of the members we raised a total of \$175.00. **We are seeking someone to donate a host site for the Compassionate Friends website.** If you have a host site and have space available we would appreciate being able to add the El Paso TCF to the site. Please send me an e-mail to inquire.

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.

Mail all Entries to: Eric Winkelman
5337 Hunters Glenn
El Paso, TX 79932
or
E-mail me at: ejwinkel@sbcglobal.net
Visit our Website at: www.elpasotcf.org

National Office: TCF National Office
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(630) 990-0010 or (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Facing Grief in the Workplace

By John H. Stanley

TCF, Southern Piedmont Chapter, N.C. *Reprinted with permission of the author and "We Need Not Walk Alone," the national publication of The Compassionate Friends.*

Monday, morning. I was down. As they say, "Rainy days and Mondays always get me down." But, this Monday was particularly despairing. Susan, our bright, blue eyed, blond haired 16-year-old child had died in an auto accident the previous Tuesday night. Having taken the customary three days funeral leave, this Monday was my first day back at the office.

It was awkward. Awkward for me and awkward for my fellow employees. People seemed apprehensive to talk about anything. How in the world does one co-habit with grief and work? There is no energy, no drive. How did other bereaved parents "get on" with their lives and grieve?

I remembered Guy. His 16-year-old son died in a car accident. Immediately, he stopped associating socially with those that he worked with. I wondered why. They had had so much fun. Within a year I heard that he changed jobs.

I remembered Al. He was a banker. After his 18-year-old son died, he threw himself into his work. He was in his office by 7 a.m., and he was at the office or at a community meeting until after 9 p.m. Within a year he was elected president of the Chamber of Commerce and within two years he was president of his Rotary Club. I wondered if this was what "they" called "denial?" The "word about town" was that he and his wife were not getting along well. In conversations years later, he admitted that he absolutely refused to discuss the son. But, his wife had the need to share memories. He wished that he had been advised as to what to expect.

Within an hour, I was roused from this wondering by a visit from our senior vice president. He is a wonderful and compassionate fellow, and I am convinced that he meant well when he determinedly announced, "We have created several new programs and promotions for you to head up." Being a marketing manager, I should have found this an exciting and challenging opportunity. *Wrong.*

He obviously felt that I should have been kept busy so I would not mourn, or grieve. Little did he know that what I needed was rest. Or, that what I wanted was to have a heart attack. He could not have known that getting out of bed each morning and going to work was a major challenge. And, little did I know that *I* should have educated him and my fellow employees.

Lesson #1. I do not believe that we can hide from or run away from our grief by becoming workaholics, putting on an armor of "busy" as a defense. I believe that we simply delay the inevitable grief. Further, I believe that changing jobs and losing whatever support system that may be at our jobs could be devastating. It certainly would have been for me. So here it was that really awful Monday. Within minutes I would be asked the same question that has been asked probably a million times to every bereaved father around the world, in every nation, and in every language, "*How is your wife doing?*"

Lesson #2. People speak in code. Question: "How is your wife/husband doing?" Translation: "How are you?" "How are you doing?" I believe that people honestly care, but they do not know what to say. It is up to us to educate them. In an outstanding article, "Facing Grief" in the April, 1996 issue of *Personnel Journal*, it was reported that a significant 74% human resource

managers interviewed acknowledged that they were at a loss for words or that they were self-conscious about what to do for the bereaved.

Lesson #3. Acting as if nothing has happened does not work. I could not deny the existence of Susan Stanley. I remember standing in front of a mirror and saying over and over and over again, maybe five or ten minutes at a time: "*Our daughter died. Our daughter died.*" Why? Because in my job I meet new people constantly. And, I'll bet you know exactly the question that always comes up – that's right, "How many children do you have?" or, "Do you have children?" I had to be in a position of telling the truth. So, I had to confront myself with information.

Lesson #4. Since we have not control over our emotions and the circumstances, we must learn to accept and manage that change. Managing this change means realizing what is going on. For instance, we bereaved may express a shortness of temper toward our fellow employees when they talk about their children and grandchildren. We may think this completely thoughtless of them, especially about 2:30 each afternoon when the office phones light up with sons and daughters calling to tell mom that they have had a wonderful day at school.

Here we are in an office situation. Our fellow office worker was talking on the phone that morning to her married daughter about their newly born grandchild. That afternoon that same coworker asked if we will help her with something. Bingo. The "buckshot effect." We are mad with everybody and everything. We bereaved are depressed, and we scramble to find answers, to find peace, to find the "quick fix." Pending holidays are horrible and birthdays and anniversary dates are especially difficult times.

Lesson #5. I believe we should meet grief on its own terms, that we should take control. This may mean taking vacation days on birthdays and anniversary days. It may mean saving vacation time during the holidays to take a trip.

Being in control means, I believe, calling on our supervisor to establish priorities and communicate exactly how we are doing and what we are feeling. I remember finding it very difficult to concentrate and I remember being fatigued.

Being unable to concentrate, I found it helpful to sit with that senior vice president occasionally and review what I was working on and to set intermediate goals and priorities. Is there a possibility of telecommuting from home via phone, e-mail, fax? Does the company offer flextime? Coming to work earlier than others and therefore, leaving earlier? Or, are there others who can pick up some of the more involved duties for a time?

Lesson #6. The real paradox: Only by allowing ourselves to feel the most intense and shattering pain can we move toward a life in which pain is not the center.

So how do we co-habit with grief and our careers? Do you remember when you started your career? Or, do you remember your first day on your job? We looked good. Our shoes were polished, our hair fixed. Our clothes pressed. But, at the same time everything was so unfamiliar. Strange. We started, we took those baby steps. We set small goals.

Well, guess what? Here we are again. Starting all over. Taking those baby steps ... trying to learn to live again ... setting those small goals. There is the knowledge that the vast majority of us survive the painful bereavement process, and many find new meaning and purpose to our lives. Many will themselves become the company bereavement specialist, nurturing employees who suffer the loss of a loved one, and advising co-workers on how they can best support their teammate.

Spring'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:
3/1/09	Alan D.	22	Son of David and Chela Bardnell
3/2/09	Chistopher	19	Son of Lisa Schiefelbein
3/12/09	Diego	5 Mo.	Son of Francisco & Marcela Zubiata
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
4/01/04	Shawn Hektor	8	Son of Michelle Krauter
4/29/94	Matthew	4	Son of Eric and Patsy Winkelman
4/30/09	Mark	21	Son of Bethany and Gustavo Olivas
5/5/09	Monica Belle	5 Mo.	Daughter of Monica Marquez
5/11/04	Christopher	19	Son of Colleen Lydon
5/16/09	Tania	15	Daughter of Abraham & Veronica Lozoya
5/18/04	Aylssa	15 Months	Daughter of Desiree and Hugo Villanueva
5/30/04	Anthony	20	Son of Richard and Sylvia Chacon

GRIEF AS PART OF HEALING

The person who resists grieving may successfully ward off intense pain. Still, a nagging ache will likely take its place. Denied feelings of grief will be expressed in hidden ways. A low-grade crisis can then endure for many years; moodiness, irritability, restlessness, nervousness, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, conflicts in relations with others, physical ailments, accident proneness, reckless spending, or general dissatisfaction or disappointment with life. Grief doesn't go away just because it is ignored. Healing involves being willing to hurt more now in order to hurt much less later.

- Ann Kaiser Stearns, "Living Through Personal Crisis"

Life Can be Good Again

By Don Hackett
Kingston, Mass.

For nearly 16 years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years.

Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.
- Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.
- Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.
- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.
- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me.

No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt-producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

Reprinted with permission from an issue of "We Need Not Walk Alone," the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

How to Maintain a Marriage After Child-Loss

Many couples who have experienced the death of their child may also experience a crisis in their marriage as a result. This untimely event can be an opportunity for growth bringing the two people closer together.

The belief that a bereaved couple is doomed to divorce is blown way out of proportion. In fact, a Compassionate Friends survey has indicated that only 4 percent of couples who divorce do so because of the child's death; that something else was wrong in the relationship before the child died. If the couple has always had a good marriage, typically that marriage will grow stronger, not collapse. Making your relationship a priority during this difficult time should be your goal. One way to do this is to talk about your child. Remember the good times, funny incidents. Laugh at something silly that your child did as well as remember any awards, honors and graduations that made you so proud. Don't dwell on how your child died. That is not going to bring him or her back. If you feel guilty about something, talk about it. If you are angry about something, talk about that also. Couples have a bond with their child that no one else can match and by talking about those bonds and your feelings, you may realize how very similar you feel or at least respect the opposite feelings of your partner.

The chance of both parents grieving in the same way is unlikely. Partners should allow each other grieving space at their own rate and in their own way. Personality, previous experiences, and your own style of grieving contribute to that respect of grieving space. If one partner wants to cry, that doesn't mean the other one has to cry. If one partner doesn't feel like going out, he or she shouldn't feel obligated to do so. If you can't decide what to make for breakfast, don't worry about it; your child died, you need time to adjust, and you eventually will.

A few other suggestions may work for you. Talk to friends about your relationship with your husband to ease the stress buildup. Perhaps they have a good resource for any problems. You may also need to express feelings about your loss to friends that you are not ready to discuss with your spouse. Sometimes when one partner feels really bad, going off on your own for a few hours or a day may give you a new perspective. Don't bring your spouse down or make him/her suffer with sarcastic comments, harmful accusations just because you feel miserable. Look for ways you can please your spouse to ease some of his/her pain. Do some activity with him/her that you don't usually do but know the other would like you to. Make a special meal that the other enjoys eating. Or do something related to your child that up until now you have not been able to do. At the end of the day, coming together is important. Review with your spouse what has happened that day, how you are feeling and what you are thinking. You will more than likely learn a lot about your partner during this period of your life more than at any other time.

Time is also a great healer. As time passes you will discover a sense of acceptance of what has happened to you and your spouse and, hopefully, have the willingness to learn to find new ways of living your life 'together' without your child.

- by Sandy Fox, author of "I Have No Intention of Saying Goodbye," stories of hope and healing from the death of a child.

SEASONS CHANGE AND SO DO WE

These warm days remind us spring is here and summer is coming. Some of us, as bereaved parents, stare at the yard and think: "Where will the energy come from to prune the plant one more time, now that our child is dead?"

Spring is a time of renewal, nature's loving promise of eternal life. So many things about our child will never die: The light in young eyes that came with a smile, the warmth of a hug, the joy we experienced as we watched the child discover and grow. These things came from love — our love and our child's love. Is there a way to take back love or the memories of it? Once experienced, love is eternal, just as the awakening of each season occurs over and over, and will always do so.

We can do some things, even in our state of depleted energy. Touching growing things can rejuvenate a battered heart. Try planting a small flower bed or a pot of special flowers in memory of your child. Tend it with love and watch it respond. It will give you pleasure and a closeness with your child that you can experience in no other way. The strength to face your bereavement will grow with the plants.

One of our members planted a rose garden in memory of her son. She speaks of how much she enjoys looking at the roses outside, and bringing them in. Tending the rose garden is a special act of love, an act of cherishing. Planting, tending, and enjoying is a salute to our child and to the way the world is planned for eternal renewal and change. Perhaps it says we don't have the energy to recover all at once, so we will care for these tender plants as we heal. Healing is not instantaneous, even for a limb pruned by the clippers.

When grass is mowed down, it's not back to the original height in the morning. If nature heals slowly, maybe this is the way set up for us, too. Each season invites us to experience its cycle, its pattern, which — while it involves change and yes, even death — is a promise that as one stage in our lives turns into another, there can be beauty and joy mixed in with the pain and loss. We do not believe when the trees bare themselves in the fall, there will never be green leaves again. With the arrival of yet another cycle, touch, see, smell, taste, and perhaps enjoy nature's renewal. The

eternal cycles are a promise that nothing ever goes away permanently. They speak to us of strength for change and immortality — our own and our child's.

- Elizabeth B. Estes, TCF, Augusta, GA

'The Butterfly'

In Christian art, the butterfly is often used as a symbol of hope deriving from the Resurrection. In its three distinct stages—the caterpillar, the chrysalis, the butterfly—it clearly echoes the cycle of life, death, resurrection. And how fitting that it is only in its triumphant final stage that the breathtaking beauty of the butterfly is revealed! -

Anonymous



Butterfly Wings of Hope

I will never forget the first time I noticed a butterfly at Easter time after my son died. As I observed the beauty and splendor of God's magnificent creation, I felt a glimmer of hope within me. I knew it was a sign and I realized for the first time that I was awakening from my cocoon of grief. Inside the cocoon I was engulfed in darkness and depression and I felt constricted. I couldn't see beyond my grief; I was alone...I could not see life and beauty around me.

When I saw the beautiful, otherworldly butterfly flying freely, I realized that I was emerging from my cocoon. I could see the light again and I was free. I was never alone, God was always with me protecting me in the cocoon until the time was right to give me wings and release me into my new life. A life that would never be the same without my son, but a new life filled with hope and beauty until we meet again in heaven.

-Bev Elero, TCF Leesburg 'Dear Bereaved Parents, Siblings, and Grandparents, I pray that you will emerge from the cocoon of grief and grow butterfly wings of hope.'

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

In This Place

Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled
a dreadful distance. You have come,
seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.
In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others' expectations taken off.
Walk into these few hours as into an oasis
where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.
In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one's story may be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.
Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;
we do not count how many tears are shed.
Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,
for the long and winding road that is ahead.
And those we love are pleased we are together.
They smile down on us, and bless this day,
glad for every tiny step we're taking
and send their light to guide us on our way.
Traveling with us as we journey onward,
sending strength for what the miles may bring,
they are a part of everything we do that matters -
in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry from *Catching the Light –
Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child* Written for
TCF meetings

Online Support Community Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national Web site offers “virtual chapters” through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing.

There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include “Pregnancy and Infant Loss,” “Bereaved 2 Years and Under,” “Bereaved 2 Years and Over,” “No Surviving Children,” “Survivors of Suicide.” There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit the link below and click “Online Support” in the “Resources” column:
www.compassionatefriends.org.

One Moment in Time

By Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd M. Mennen
TCF, Katy, Texas

As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives. This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that one big career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives, things are different. We are not like other people.

We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be the same. We definitively mark the time before and after our child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy; it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments, setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions were shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we will feel balanced, optimistic and serene?

We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true sunshine as time moved forward. How did they do it?

Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF meetings or other offerings that give

Self Help Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parent

Address Correction Requested



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
1000 MONTANA
EL PASO, TX 79902