



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



January



February



Welcome to our
Winter Meetings

Date: Wednesdays
January 28, 2009
February 25, 2009

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

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

Board Of Directors:

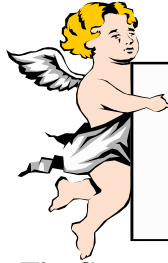
Chairman and Meeting Facilitator:
Susan Crews 542-0908

Secretary and Treasurer:
Lou Cain

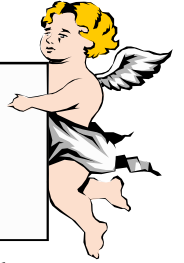
Newsletter, Website, Copies &
Mailing: The Winkelmans

Mark Your Calendar For the Spring Meetings

March 25: Regular Meeting
April 29: Regular Meeting
May 27: Regular Meeting



Editor's Notes



The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

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!”

YOU NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Mail all Entries to: Eric Winkelman
5337 Hunters Glenn
El Paso, TX 79932
ejwinkel@sbcglobal.net

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

Visit Our Website at: www.elpasotcf.org

Some Things to Think About and Wrestle With as a New Year Begins

We could each make decisions that are best for us individually during the holidays. As we move into a New Year, here are four of the suggestions offered:

1. Do what feels right to YOU, not what feels right to someone else. This is true every day, but it has special importance during this tender time of year.
2. Remember that experts who study us say that when a parent loses a child, 85 percent of your total body's energy is consumed with grief work! That leaves only 15 percent of your energy ... total. If we evenly divide that up, we find we have only about 5 percent of our normal energy to do physical things, 5 percent to do emotional things, and 5 percent to do spiritual things. Use what little bit of left-over energy you have to do what feels right to you. Make choices for yourself. Don't let others make choices for you. Choices. Be sure they are your choices.
3. Talk about your child as much (or as little) as you want to this season. Remember that family and friends who haven't walked this journey of grief may be afraid to recall memories of special holiday times, or they may be hesitant to even speak the name of your child for fear of making you "remember" him or her. Well, duh. Don't hesitate to say, "I need to talk about _____ (Philip) tonight." Or, "Do you remember that time when _____?"
4. Remember that the craziest, most unnatural thing in the world has happened to you: You have lived longer than your child. If we agree that the craziest thing possible has happened, how can anything we think or do during this holiday season be "crazy?" If anyone dares to say to you, "I can't believe you hung her stocking up this year," just remember they are ignorant people. You can say nothing ... or, you can kindly say, "This is what I need to do." And leave it at that.

Elaine Grier is an assistant professor of adult nursing at Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University. She teaches nursing students about the experience of grief throughout their baccalaureate curriculum. She also previously served as co-chapter leader of our Atlanta Chapter of TCF.

Seasoned Grief

*By Eva Lager ~ TCF, Perth, Western Australia
From We Need Not Walk Alone, Spring 1999 Issue*
There used to be a point to summing up a year just past
not as a personal accomplishment but as a reflection.
Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible
thing to do.
I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older.
With new years clean and full of possibilities,
becoming another person seemed simple,
another chance at getting it right,
like a redemption, being forgiven for
having blundered or been found wanting.
But death changed everything, without permission.
Resolutions, made sincerely and broken quickly,
offended my need to hold on to the past,
to rewind life, fast backwards,
so I could capture what I had lost.
Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas.
And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must,
I understood there would be another future,
not the one I thought I had the right to expect
but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.
© 1999 by Eva Lager

The New Year

The New Year comes
when all the world is ready for
changes,
resolutions -
great beginnings.
For us, to whom the stoke of midnight
means a missing child remembered,
For us, the New Year comes
more like another darkness.
But let us not forget
that this may be the year
when love and hope and courage
find each other somewhere
in the darkness.
To lift their voices and speak:
Let there be light...
- Sascha Wagner

Happy Valentine's Day

LOVE LETTER TO MY COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

This is my love letter to you on Valentine's Day. When Sarah died I thought my heart would never again feel anything except pain. I was so overwhelmed with grief. My thoughts and feelings were only of my own tragedy. And then I met you.

You shared your sorrow and your tears with me. I learned of your loss, your life, your child now gone. And my heart was broken for you - my weary heart, that I thought would never care about anyone else ever again. When you shared your hurting, vulnerable, intimate core of yourself with me, my heart was revived. When you trusted me to know your precious child and your bruised love for this one who was the delight of your heart, my exhausted soul was encouraged. Your words comfort me. Your hugs strengthen me. Your tears quench my thirst.

As I see you heal, I know that I'll also become whole again. When I hear you laugh, I trust that lightness will one day return to my heart. Thank you for being my compassionate friend. I love you.

- Linda McLean, TCF/Medford, OR

A Valentine to My Child

As long as I can dream,
As long as I can think,
As long as I have memory...
I will love you.

As long as I have eyes to see,
And ears to hear,
And lips to speak...
I will love you.

As long as I have a heart to feel,
As soul stirring within me,
An imagination to hold you...
I will love you.

As long as there is time,
As long as there is love,
As long as I have a breath,
To speak your name...
I will love you.

Because I love you more than
anything in all the world.

- Daniel Houghton

Valentine Message

I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.
My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.
Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.
I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX

THE SEASON OF THE HEART

This is the Season of the Heart!

Yet, many of us will be asking how to live during this season with a heart that is broken. Just what is it that our hearts know during these days? What are the feelings that pulsate and ebb and flow? Is it—

...the Heart that catches its breath on a memory and is overwhelmed?

...the Heart where hope seems absent?

...the Heart that feels it absolutely cannot hold one more ounce of pain?

...the Heart that knows the fleeting smile of a loved one?

...the Heart that catches a fragment of joy and is warmed?

...the Heart that knows pain, and keeps on loving?

...the Heart that is tempted to lie still and lonely?

...the Heart that searches for the acceptance of a friend?

Questions arise!

Why is a heart red and why does it have two lobes?

A response might be—

... a Heart is so vulnerable; so easily bloodied.

... a Heart consists of opposites; changed by sorrow and by joy.

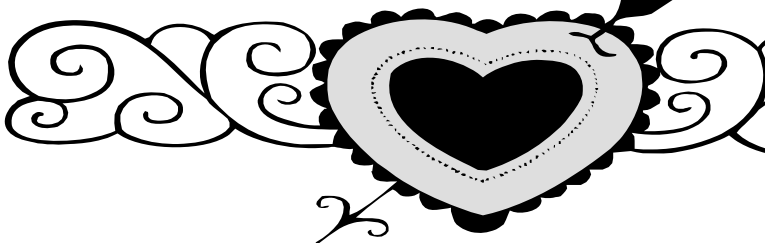
... a Heart, when whole, includes all emotions.

... a Heart can lie cold and sad and broken.

... a Heart can grow and heal and love...

We EACH have our choices to make!

Mary Andrews, TCF/So. Maryland



Dancing in the Rain

The following article was written by Julie Short, a member of the Southeastern Illinois chapter of TCF. She wrote it "in loving memory of Kyra." The article is reprinted from the Summer 2008 issue of "We Need Not Walk Alone."

The words "it is what it is" continually run through my mind. Our worlds don't often turn out as we imagined. My handsome prince didn't come and rescue me as a teen. He didn't whisk me off to a beautiful castle where he treated me like a queen. We didn't have four beautiful, healthy children or live happily ever after.

In fact, my life journey hasn't been at all like I had imagined, with the exception of one beautiful daughter, Kyra.

I was only six months into my grief when I attended The Compassionate Friends national conference in Boston. I remember grudgingly agreeing to attend a workshop titled "Another Day, Another Opportunity." I thought, *I don't want to go to that one*, because at the time, another day was just another opportunity to feel great pain and anguish. But something was pulling me to attend the session, so I went and was so grateful that I did, because it has helped me to find a new goal. One of the most memorable things the workshop presenter said was that until we are able to let go of our child's physical death, we cannot embrace their spiritual essence. It has been four years since Kyra's death, and I can now say that the farther I walk from her death, the closer I feel to her. The pain is still evident, but to feel her presence again is wonderful. I first felt it on the beach at Cape Elizabeth in Maine. I felt her spirit cry out, "I am free! Come and dance with me."

Kyra loved to dance. The country music song, "I Hope You Dance," was released before she died. I told Kyra that I dedicated it to her and gave her a plaque with the words inscribed on wood. The words in the song speak of not giving up when life becomes hard. I thought then that I had gotten it for her, when actually I think it was meant for me and other bereaved parents.

The word *dance* seems to be etched into my mind.

Recent-ly, a friend shared a quote she had come across: "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass ... It's about learning to dance in the rain."

Wow – what awesome words! The image of a storm is a good analogy in understanding our grief. Storms can come from nowhere, like a tornado, seemingly destroying everything in their path and leaving our lives in complete and utter shambles. The darkness and dreariness stay while lightning continues to flash, stabbing our hearts with pain. Thunder clamors constantly, reminding us that our children are gone. We can walk in fog for what seems like years as the sleet and frigid cold freeze us in our tracks. The wind howls, imitating our screams and wailing. The rain seems to be endless.

Others, who haven't lost their children, who are living in sunshine, cry out to us, "Come in out of the rain." They don't understand that often we're just not able to move. The storm has become our world, for however long we need or choose to live there. My own experience of grief tells me that our lives will always be stormier than they were before the hurricanes came and took what was most precious to us. But, we do have a choice. We can stay hunkered down under the false protection of denial. We can lock ourselves up in a protective shell and never come out. Or, we can learn to dance in the rain. However, each bereaved parent must decide what feels best to them.

I find myself thinking, *"It's hard to crawl, walk or breathe without her and she wants me to dance?! She must have forgotten all those times I tried and she said, "Mom you can't dance!"* Then I realize that she's not referring to my ability when I hear, *Dance, mom, dance! Dance in the rain. Dance because you can't change what has already been done. You have the choice to sit it out or dance. Listen for the music, keep your eyes wide open, go forward, follow the music and dance. Follow me. I am not behind you. I am in front of you. I'm free and I am dancing.*

She taught me to hear the music and her song continues on. Without it, I couldn't dance.

I believe if we allow our children to lead us to dance in the rain that they will eventually dance us out of the severe storms of pain and into the sunshine of peace.

*And when the skies are gray
because I went away
Put on your dancing shoes,
grab your umbrella,
and
dance*

In Memory of Clinton

A happy baby boy quick to smile
A lovely child who would hold your neck for a while
Told your foot was deformed and you may not walk
Not only did you walk and run but boy did you learn how to talk
Oh the questions you would ask during your elementary years
Can still make me laugh even through all the tears
Momma why do kids tease Santa because he's so fat?
Why does daddy who has no hair still need to wear a hat?
Oh the memories of your touch, your smile and kiss
The memories of the beautiful 17-year-old man are the ones I
really miss
A life full of ups, downs but mainly joy fill my head
And help me to deal with the many empty years ahead
What gives me the most comfort in each and every way
Is knowing that I will hold you again one great day.
Written by Candace Walker
In memory of her son, Clinton Walker Birthday: January 31

What I Have Learned - Five Years Later

By Tamie Dodge, Atlanta Chapter, TCF

January 14 will be my daughter, Jessica's, fifth angel date. She passed away on Jan. 14, 2004, only 16 years old. I remember shortly after her death wondering if I would feel the same depth of sadness after five years. I am not sure why I focused on five years. I suppose that – back then – it seemed impossible that she was gone five seconds and could not imagine life still moving forward into years.

I remember my sister asking me shortly after her death, "What have you learned from this?" I remember thinking that that was a very odd question. At that time, all I had learned was what the horrible depth of true grief was like and how little control I really had over the most important things in my life, the well being of my children.

In a way her question upset me, even though I did not tell her that. It upset me as I felt she was trying to analyze my grief the same way she analyzed her divorce. She has a Masters Degree in Psychology and she has a tendency to over analyze many things to the point that I feel she loses touch with people's true emotions.

I now look back and ask myself that same question. What have I learned from the experience of losing a child?

- I will still say that I learned that we can try to control the things that are most important to us, but only to a point.
 - I learned that we have little control over the things that we cannot predict.
 - I have learned how to be much more compassionate toward all people as we just don't know what their experiences have been.
 - I have learned how not to take anything for granted.
 - I have learned to tell the people I love how I feel on a regular basis as you just never know what the future will hold.
 - I have learned what is truly precious in life and it is not summed up in things, but people.
 - I have also learned that I have much more to learn and my search for all of the answers will last a lifetime.
- Jessica has taught me so many things, both in life and in her death. I miss her with all of my heart, mind and soul. I can still see her so clearly in my mind. In my mind I can still hear her belly laughs and smell her fragrance. For this I am eternally grateful. I just pray that if I am still here on this earth 20 years from now I can say the same thing.
- Jessica, I love you, miss you, want you back more then I can say. I hope you are dancing with the angels.

WE NEED EACH OTHER

Many living things need each other to survive. If you have ever seen a Colorado aspen tree, you may have noticed that it does not grow alone. Aspens are found in clusters, or groves. The reason is that the aspen sends up new shoots from the roots. In a small grove, all of the trees may actually be connected by their roots. Giant California redwood trees may tower 300 feet into the sky. It would seem that they would require extremely deep roots to anchor them against strong winds. But we're told that their roots are actually quite shallow in order to capture as much surface water as possible. And they spread in all directions, intertwining with other redwoods. Locked together in this way, all trees support each other in wind and storms. Like the aspen, they never stand alone. They need each other to survive.

People also are connected by a system of roots. We are born to family and learn early to make friends. We are not meant to survive long without others. And like the redwood, we need to hold one another up. When pounded by the sometimes vicious storms of life, we need others to support and sustain us. Have you been going it alone? Maybe it's time to let someone else help hold you up for awhile. Or perhaps someone needs to hang on to you.

~ From the book, "Riches Of The Heart" by Steve Goodier. Special permission to reprint granted to The Compassionate Friends by the author.

This year...

The silence of a starry night,
the brightness of the snow,
and the crispness in the air
remind me of you.

Memories of you
allow joy to sneak in.
Though time has not healed,
love has.
and love needs time to show
itself
when smothered in fear.

This year...

The glitter of garland,
the tinkling of bells,
and the cheer of glad tidings
remind me of you.

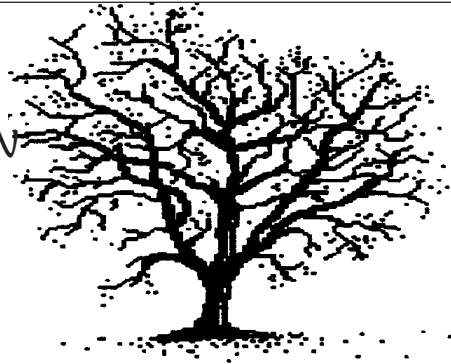
And you...

remind me to love.

By Sandy Goodman,
Author of "Love Never Dies: A
Mother's Journey from Loss to
Love

Our Children Remembered

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Parents</u>
1/3/07	John Michael	12	Son of Kevin Lockett
1/14/91	Richard	19	Son of Josie Sanchez
1/14/98	Carly Raquel	18	Daughter of Carlos and Rachel Martinez
1/21/00	Eric Lozano	20	Son of Rosa and Oscar Miranda
2/2/03	Joshua Chavez	1 Mo.	Son of Amanda and Marc Ovalle
2/9/80	Greg	20	Son of Sidney and Bobbi Cohen
2/11/05	Dametri	23 Mo.	Son of Charmine Jackson
2/12/05	Elijah	2	Son of Charmine Jackson
2/15/95	Michael	17	Son of Eddie and Laurie Knipp
2/17/91	Evan	14 Mo.	Son of Al and Eva Dominguez
2/17/80	Rebecca	22	Daughter of Carlos and Delphina Hernandez
2/19/95	C. J.	20	Son of Mary Jane De Cutler

COMMUNICATION WITH SURVIVING CHILDREN

If you are fortunate enough to have surviving children, when was the last time you:

- Told them how important they are to you?
- Thanked them for their patience with you during these dark hours?
- Assured them that had it been one of them who died, it would have been just the same?
- Told them that the reason you struggle so hard to survive is because you want to enjoy life with them again?
- Reassured them there will be joy and some happiness in your family's life again when you have had the necessary time to create your new life?
- If you haven't told them lately—or even if you have—tell them again. Both you and they need that reassurance.

- Mary Cleckley

SOLACE

In the smallest hour of your day,
when you are alone
with things remembered,
questions unanswered
and unfinished dreams, then:
Give to yourself
the gifts of your kindness,
bring to yourself
the comforts of forgiving,
share with yourself,
the mercy of your love.

- Sascha Wagner

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

SPIRIT GIFTS

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We'll have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us. But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to my child, to our years together and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never goodbye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. My child lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me. When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young person missed by not getting to live out

his life, I try to remember to focus on the present child, the one who lives inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often, he reminds me to pay attention and not miss the beauty of nature that surrounds me. (He noticed the details in nature and loved the outdoors so much more than I.) No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains with you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still very much alive. So...may the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this day and through every moment of this journey and the reestablishing of your life without their physical presence.
- Kitty Reeves, San Francisco, CA

THE YEAR BEFORE LAST

The holiday season is approaching, and with it comes the New Year. Although for me time passes slowly, New Year's Day will ring in quickly.

I dread this New Year's Day because they will look at me in a terribly strange way when I get misty-eyed, and talk about something you had done.

After you first left me, they reasoned when I cried, "He's only been gone a few months." And I would catch that look of understanding in their eyes, and found some comfort that they knew.

But on last New Year's Day, my first thought upon awakening was, Oh God, my son died last year, not just a few months ago, not even this year, but last year.

He will never live in this year.

They didn't understand, they didn't reason, that last year, for me, the loss was still new. They thought, "It happened last year, so long ago, why does she still

cry?" I could see it in their eyes. This New Year's Day, will it be different?

Will my first thought upon awakening be, Oh God, my son died the year before last,

not a few months ago, not this year or even last year, but the year before last?

He will never live in this year.

Will they even listen, should I not look them in the eyes, for fear that I shall see,

"Why is she still crying? It happened so long ago. It was the year before last."

Those words that we use to describe the passage of time, a few months, this year, last year, the year before last. They don't

know that time stands still for me.

Will they understand that's why I cry?

Don't they know my son just died ...the year before last?

- Author unknown



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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