



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



December



January



February



Welcome to our Winter Meetings

Date: Wednesdays
January 27, 2010
February 24, 2010

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

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

Board Of Directors:

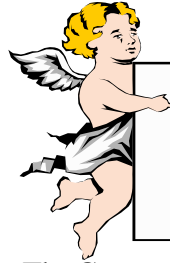
Chairman and Meeting Facilitator:
Susan Crews 542-0908

Secretary and Treasurer:
Lou Cain

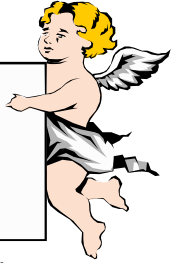
Newsletter, Website, Copies &
Mailing: The Winkelmans

Mark Your Calendar For the Spring Meetings

March 31: Regular Meeting
April 28: Regular Meeting
May 26: 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
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ejwinkel@sbcglobal.net

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

Visit Our Website at: www.elpasotcf.org

DEALING WITH HOLIDAY HEARTACHE IN A SEASON OF JOY

Christmas decorations in September and holiday music in October were not what my friend Alexandra needed. Alexandra's 6-year-old died four months ago, and her heart is still raw. She's been wondering how she'll cope without her daughter over the holidays — just last year a time of joy and celebration. Years ago, I anticipated the holidays would be tough. I'd wake on those cold mornings after Daniel died in February 1997 and be grateful it was still months until his August birthday and even more months until Christmas. I dreaded living both days without my son. As those who had lost loved ones let me know, you have to live through it. Christmas came. I did live through it. It continues to happen, as do the other significant days of the year. Here are 11 tips I've used and continue to use to survive the holidays. Some are my own suggestions and some are borrowed from the many who walk the path of grief.

1. Know you will survive. It will not be easy, but others have done it and you will, too.
2. Find someone you can talk to or meet with during the holiday season. Perhaps this person can give you helpful ideas that have worked for her.
3. Don't think you have to do the "traditional" activities of years past. Your energy level is low. If no one in your household minds, skip putting up the tree or spending hours making holiday cookies.
4. Spend the holidays with those who will let you talk about your loved one. You will need to recall memories, if you choose to do so. Your stories about your loved one are wonderful legacies. Tell them boldly again and again.
5. If going into the mall or stores brings too much pain, shop for gifts online or through mail-order catalogs. Thinking everyone is happily shopping at the malls while your heart is crushed is terribly tough.
6. Getting away from the house worked for my family. The first Christmas without Daniel we went to a nearby town and lived in the Embassy Suites. The kids enjoyed the indoor pool and breakfast buffets.
7. Create something to give to those who have helped you throughout the year. I made some very simple tree ornaments with "In Memory of Daniel" stamped on them and gave them to friends that first Christmas.
8. Decorate the grave. Sometimes being busy with decorating the grave gives a feeling of doing something for a child we can no longer hold.
9. Do something in memory of your loved one. Donate to a charity. Volunteer. My oldest daughter Rachel and I volunteered at the Hospice Tree of Remembrance and shared memories of Daniel as we spent this time together.
10. If your bereavement support group has a special candle-lighting service, attend it. Doing something in memory of your loved one with others who understand the pain can be therapeutic.
11. Spend time reflecting on what the season is about. Everyone around you may be frantic with attending parties, services, shopping and visiting relatives. Give yourself permission to excuse yourself from them. Light a candle in your favorite scent. Record some thoughts in a journal. One day you will wake up and it will be January 2. The holidays will have ended. You will have made it. If you are like me, you will find that surviving the tinsel has made you stronger, and although you may cry, somewhere within you, you will feel that core of new steel.

(Written by Alice J. Wisler, who is the author of the new novel, "Rain Song." Visit her Web site for more articles:

<http://www.alicewisler.com>. Permission to use this article given by the author).

Happy New Year

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



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.

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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

Happy Valentine's Day

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

A HEART WEEPS

This is a level of loss
That numbs every part of my being
My heart is bound so tightly
That it cannot even weep.
Will this ever end?
The ground lies bare and brown
Covered with last year's leaves.
The earth is cold and hard
As desolate as my heart.
Sustain me in this hour!
Today, from that barren earth
A clump of green appeared
White snowdrops clustered there.
And I saw, once again, a
Fragment of beauty!
I weep with thanksgiving
For this beauty that has warmed me.
For this heart that leapt, and now knows
That joy can enter once again.
Marie Andrews TCF Southern Maryland

IN FEBRUARY

In February we celebrate the birthday of George Washington and Abe Lincoln. Lent begins. We wonder if the groundhog will see his shadow, and we have Valentine's Day in the middle of the month. Most people think of Valentine's Day as Sweetheart Day. Candy, flowers, and cards are often exchanged. Many time cards are given and received between parents and children as a way of showing love for one another. Valentine's Day is another holiday on which bereaved parents remember the drawings and cards and gifts received from their deceased child.

Take time out to be good to yourself. Take time out to remember the child who has died. Perhaps you could remember that child with a special flower, a rose or carnation; or perhaps you could do a kindness for someone in need in his or her memory; or send a special card to someone in need of help and understanding.

Most of all, take time out to tell your living children and your spouse or that someone special how fortunate you are to have them and how much they mean to you.

- **Lorraine Bauman**
TCF/Fairmont, MN

I generally write a poem about our journey several times a year. The other day I was listening to a talk radio show here in Denver and the host mentioned how his daughter is a little older now and this year he will buy her roses for Valentines Day for the first time. I thought to myself how much I would love to give Ashley roses again. I began to think about roses, and then about Ashley, and then I just sat down and wrote a few lines that I am honored to share with my friends here. I wish you all a gentle Valentines Day, this holiday of love always reminds me of how much we truly love all of our children.



A GRANDPARENT'S HOLIDAY DILEMMA

A difficult part of being a bereaved grandparent at the holiday time is that we are expected to be all things to all our children. To those who have healthy and complete families we are expected to share in their joy. To our bereaved child we are expected to understand, empathize and, above all, be aware of the special difficulty the holidays bring for them. We are put in the middle between our children, happy families on one side, and a sad one on the other. In addition, we have our own pain to deal with.

It seems to me that this is an impossible situation and frequently we are expected to do the impossible, but I don't think we can, nor do I think we should try. Because I am a bereaved parent myself and I have experienced that special grief, I know my bereaved daughter's second Christmas without her Emily will be a hard one, maybe even harder than the first one. It will be especially hard for her because this year my oldest son and his (complete) family will come from Minneapolis

to St. Louis for Christmas. He has three little ones; the oldest is the same age that Emily would be. Seeing Bob's children, especially Robbie, will remind Dorothy even more that Emily will not be physically a part of our holidays. For weeks I have been tormented with thoughts on how I will handle this situation. Will I act at the holidays in a way that will make my son happy, or in ways that will be supportive of my daughter? Granted, there will be separate times when I can be happy that my son and his family are here and happy to see my grandchildren, whom I don't see often; and there will be a time when I can be totally supportive of my bereaved daughter.

But this will not be possible for all the time, especially on Christmas Day. I have decided that, as hard as it may be to do, I must make a choice between them this year, and I choose to be supportive of my bereaved daughter. This may sound unfair, but is it? When our children were younger, weren't there times, such as when one was sick and needed our special attention, didn't we

give it to them, oft times to the neglect of the others? This didn't mean we loved the sick child more than the others. It simply meant that the sick one needed us more than the others at that time. Our bereaved child is experiencing the most pain he/she will ever experience in his/her life and right now, needs us more.

Unfortunately, our child with the complete family may resent our attention to the bereaved child and feel neglected maybe even hurt, and for that we are sorry, but our child who has not lost a child has not experienced the constant pain and hurt our bereaved child has for a year or longer. We cannot let ourselves be too concerned that he/she may feel neglected or hurt for a few days.

- **Margaret Gerner, Bereaved Mother and Grandmother, St. Louis, MO**

Go to a Compassionate Friend Meeting

And get your gift...

The gift of recognition

The gift of remembrance

The gift of care

The gift of belonging

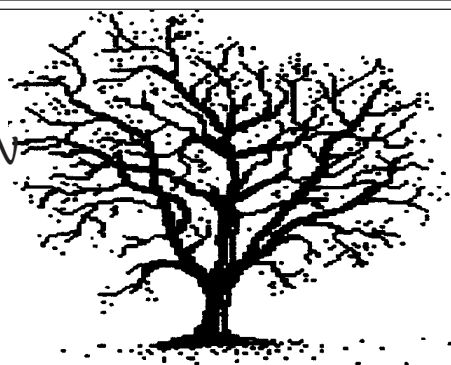
It just may be the gift of life.

- **Fay Harden**



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>
12/1/06	Elisabeth	45	Daughter of Angelica and Fred Wagner
12/6/08	Mario Santana	28	Son of Sandra Pollard
12/21/08	Arturo	36	Son of Oscar & Rosina Aguliar
1/3/07	John Michael	12	Son of Kevin Lockett
1/13/09	Samual	20 Wks	Son of Maria & Mathew Silver
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
2/7/07	Gilbert	33	Son of Rosa Minajes
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
2/21/00	Anthony J.	16	Son of Mike and Eva Lee

IN CELEBRATION OF LAUGHTER

Today I laughed, a throaty little giggle,
 a tiny laugh, this first time since you died.
 Today I laughed, no hearty chuckle,
 a light laugh, this first time since you died.
 Today I laughed a little laugh,

a little laugh, since you left.
 Today I laughed, a tinkling laugh,
 echoing from my soul, I was happy;
 it is a beginning...
Toby Sue Shaw, TCF/Stamford, CT

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 Winter

Eddie and Laura Knipp in Loving Memory of their Son Michael, Birthday Jan 10, 1978. DOD Feb 15, 1995

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**

A DOZEN ROSES

If I had a dozen roses, I know just what I'd do.
I'd give each one a name that reminded me of you.
The first rose I'd name "sunshine" cause you brighten every day.
The second would be "beauty", the kind that never goes away.
I'd name the fourth one "silly", oh how funny you could be.
Rose five, of course, is "patience", something you have
Helped me find.
The sixth rose I'd call "memories", the precious gift
You left behind.
The seventh and the eighth rose would for sure be
"Faith" and "grace".
Nine would be "unique" because no one can take your place.
The tenth rose, well, that's easy; I'd simply name it "love".
Eleven, I'd call "angel"; I know you're watching from above.
I'd think about that twelfth rose, and I'd really take my time.
After all these roses are for you, my Valentine.
I'm sending them to heaven in every color that I know.
So number twelve I'll name "forever", that's how long I will
Love you so.

- **Alan Pedersen**



Five Years Later

What I Have Learned

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 than I can say. I hope you are dancing with the angels.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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EL PASO, TX 79902