



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



# Newsletter

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## **Volume 41 No. 8 August 2020**

**Jackson, MS Chapter:** P.O. Box 1396; Jackson, MS 39215-1396; 601-713-4357

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Jerry Wigglesworth

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**Regional Coordinators:** Faye & Rex McCord  
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**Professional Advisory Board:** Bill Chancellor, Funeral Director; Chuck Prestwood, Founder Jackson Chapter; Rex & Faye McCord, Regional Coordinators

### **POSTAGE**

**PAUL BROOME in memory of CYNTHIA BROOME**

**ED and CAROLYN BUCHANAN in memory of ASHLEY BUCHANAN**

**JERRY and CINDY WIGGLESWORTH in memory of LEE WIGGLESWORTH**

### **LOVE GIFTS**

**ED and CAROLYN BUCHANAN in memory of BOB GATES**

**BILL and CHERLYN HESTER in memory of BOB GATES**

**CHUCK and MARLISE PRESTWOOD in memory of KRISSY PRESTWOOD**

**The Compassionate Friends THANK YOU for your donations**  
They are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

TCF MEETINGS

8 Reasons Your Grief Feels Worse Right Now

Though there are no universals in grief, or in the current situation, if your grief feels worse right now, you are not alone. There are a lot of reasons it is totally normal that a crisis can make grief feel worse. Here are just a few things that might be impacting you.

- **Your bandwidth was already low.** Grief can take everything you have, especially in the earliest days. When a crisis hits and you are already depleted, all of a sudden everything becomes more challenging. Things you could have managed before your loss feel insurmountable now. Aspects of your grief that you were managing before the stress or crisis suddenly seem seven times as tricky to manage.
- **The person who died was your ROCK.** You might be grieving a person who took care of you. Maybe it is the person who handled practicalities and logistics. Perhaps who checked in on you to make sure you were okay. Maybe it was the person who made you feel safe. If this is your situation, you're likely feeling even more acutely aware of their absence than ever. With that, your anxiety might be spiking.
- **You're feeling especially alone.** Grief is almost always an isolating experience. Layer on that quarantine and your feelings of loneliness might be skyrocketing. If you are living alone after your loss, no longer having contact with people by getting out of the house can start to feel like a crushing weight (especially for those extroverts out there.)
- **You're acutely aware that you're living through this thing your loved one probably never could have imagined.** Hmmm, that's clearly a weird one to sum up. But if you get it, you get it. This is a scary and surreal time. Most of us have not lived through anything like this. And there is just this weird thing in grief that happens at moments, like this when you realize the world feels fundamentally changed and it is a world your loved one never lived in. It makes us strangely more aware of the passage of time and that the world keeps turning.

Continued next page.

2nd Tuesdays monthly at 7:00 p.m.  
Fondren Presbyterian Church – Fellowship Hall  
3220 Old Canton Road, Jackson, MS

Directions: Take West Lakeland Drive exit off I-55 North until it dead ends into Old Canton Road.  
Turn right, go to 2nd traffic light.  
Fondren parking lot is on the right.

Meeting

We are all still sheltering in place. Please stay safe. Wear your mask while in public and maintain a safe distance.

We can all get through this together.

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Although our meetings are held in donated church facilities, The Compassionate Friends is not a religious organization, and espouses no religion affiliation or doctrines. Persons of all faiths (or no faith), creeds, color, and race are welcome.

Prenatal Bereavement Support Group

\*1st Wednesday/ Noon  
UMC Cong. Ctr. Jackson Medical Mall  
For more information, call  
Kelly Hinson @ 601-815-7096

\*If the meeting date falls on a holiday—the following Wednesday

For Children Grieving the Death of a Loved One

The McClean Fletcher Center—12 Northtown Drive, Jackson, MS offers peer support groups for children ages 4-18. This includes the child's family and meets every other week. For more information call:

Jennifer at 601-206-5525

MS SIDS ALLIANCE INFANT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly 1st Tuesday – 7:00 p.m.

River Oaks Hospital Lobby Classroom  
MS SIDS ALLIANCE offers education to the public and professionals on risk reduction of SIDS and bereavement support.

Cathy Files - 601-955-1057  
Leslie Threadgill – 601-573-1458



- **You're not thinking about your loved one because of the current crisis.** We have seen some themes people are sharing at this difficult time. One is "I am thinking about my loved one all the time." We'll get to that. the other is "I am so overwhelmed by the current crisis that I am barely thinking of my loved one or my grief." The latter seems to be bringing up a lot of guilt for some people. We won't tell not to feel guilty, because that's not how guilt works. We will tell you that it is totally normal if your brain doesn't seem to be making space for your grief. Our brains can only handle so much and sometimes, in a self-protective way, they start triaging. They compartmentalize things for us, so we can focus on a pressing matter at hand. If this keeps up long term, it is something worth spending some time with. But give it some time for your acute stress response from this current crisis to settle down.
- **You're annoyed everyone is complaining about stuff that your grief has had you coping with for weeks/months/years.** Are your friends suddenly complaining about isolation, overwhelm, and feelings of uncertainty about the future? Does it sound a lot like what you've been coping with for a long time? Are these things your friends haven't historically been sympathetic about? Hopefully this isn't coming up for you, but we have heard loud and clear that it is coming up for some people. It isn't that you don't empathize with your friends. Quite the opposite, in fact. You empathize deeply. It might just feel a little annoying that it took something like this for them to empathize with you.
- **You're thinking about your loved one. A lot.** Research has shown that we don't just want and miss our loved ones during the good time. We actually really want and miss them in bad times. In times of pain, stress, crisis, and indecision, we often think of and want to be close to the person who died. We imagine what they would have said or done. We find strength in things they taught us. It is actually something that most people find helpful and comforting. But it can also bring up tough, bittersweet feelings.

- **You're relieved your loved one isn't here.** Maybe this is because they were ill and the risk of getting COVID-19 on top of that illness would have been overwhelming. Perhaps it is because you know this would have negatively impacted their mental health or strained your relationship. Whatever the reason, that relief can bring up guilt. Remember, this feeling likely comes from not wanting to see your loved one suffer, which is a caring, loving instinctive reaction. You can both desperately want your loved one to be here and at the same time be relieved this is not causing them suffering.
- **You're imagining that everything would just be better if they were still here.** Don't get me wrong, we do this all the time in grief. But we ESPECIALLY do it when the going gets tough. When life is hard, we often go back to the moment our loved one died and we think, "if only they were still here, everything would be so much better." Now, they would be alive, so that would obviously be better. Even if you were trapped at home fighting. Even it was the same old boring day-to-day. They would be here, and that would mean a whole lot. But the extension that EVERYTHING would be better or easier...that's a different proposition. NO doubt having them around would make your baseline better – you wouldn't be coping with grief and this crisis But as for the rest, we really have no way to know what sort of "different" it would be. In philosophy and psychology, they call this counterfactual thinking – constructing a whole, imaginary reality around things that didn't actually happen. We imagine a world if things had gone differently. It might seem harmless enough, but if we're not aware of it, it can double-down our grief emotions. Why? Because now, instead of just coping with the stress of this crisis and desperately missing the person who died, we're also bitter or resentful or grieving this idea of what might have been. I know, this one is a little abstract. But if you've felt it, you probably know what I mean.

*Thank you to Marcia Lefteroff for forwarding this article to us.*



### Choosing Life

"It will never be the same. Never." As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief's profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, "...never the same."

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls "The Valley of the Shadow." It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. *Between*. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.

Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever "the same." Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery.

Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

*Marcia F. Alig*  
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey



### A Fitting Tribute

Came the darkness of new winter  
We huddled together in frozen disbelief  
Lowering your precious vessel into cold unfeeling  
earth.

No bird sang nor shone the sun to cast mocking  
shadows on our despair.

A light went out in the world that day  
Leaving us to shiver in the blackness of your absence.

Four seasons of our sadness have passed since that  
bleak day.

And now we return to put cold stone above your head.  
It does not seem a fitting monument for a man of joy.  
Too many tears have been shed,  
I can weep no more.

Others may not believe  
But every day your spirit comforts me.  
Your voice still speaks within my heart.  
And while I may long for the warmth of your hands on  
my shoulders

I can feel your workings in God's plan.  
I believe with perfect faith that no loss is forever.

Today I come to bury my grief  
Tomorrow may we rejoice that you have lived and  
loved us  
Erecting a monument of joy in life's celebration  
Singing a eulogy of love for the broken-hearted,  
Lighting an eternal flame of hope for those in despair.  
In your loving memory let us seek to perfect the world  
And in so doing, perfect ourselves.

I believe with perfect faith  
That you are forever.  
Your body may lie in this sorrowful ground,  
But your spirit soars with the eagles  
Still rages at injustice  
Reaches out in loving kindness  
Dances with the ecstasy of life that never ends,  
And laughs deep in the belly to cleanse us of our  
mortal sadness.

*Judy Gradford*  
TCF Rochester, NY



**Light Rekindled**

*Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into a flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who rekindle this light.—*

Albert Schweitzer

This quote was recently in the daily newsletter at the hospital where I work. Having just returned home from my ninth National Conference of The Compassionate Friends, it really hit home and made sense to me regarding my journey “through the valley.”

Our family had experienced grief in several forms in the years prior to our daughter Anna’s death. However, at this particular time in our life, everything was moving along smoothly. Life was full of hopes and dreams for the future. Then the unthinkable happened. Anna’s “sinus headaches” became so severe that she became incapacitated. Over the next few weeks the doctors struggled to establish the right diagnosis, finally providing us confirmation of the worst of their considerations. Anna had several horrible, malignant brain tumors. In forty-nine days from the diagnosis our “light went out” as our precious child breathed her last breath.

Like others who have experienced the death of a child, our lives were turned upside down without our permission. It all happened so quickly that we were spinning out of control, functioning on auto-pilot, relying on friends to perform many daily tasks. As we now look back, we realize that the numbness that we felt during those first days and weeks following her death was truly a gift. Surely no one could survive this overwhelming, gut-wrenching pain if the reality of it hit all at once. The reality comes soon enough as the intensity of grief seeps into our entire being. As life goes on for everyone around us, we are left to deal with our shattered world and wade into the mucky waters of grief.

Fortunately my husband and I became aware of The Compassionate Friends. We attended national conferences and soaked up all the information, support and hugs that were offered. We soon were committed to starting a chapter in our area, but the exhaustion of grieving prevented us from moving forward with this plan for four years.

Today, through the support of family, loyal friends in our church who allowed us to lean on their faith and hope when ours was weak, and with the new friends we have made through TCF, we have found our way to “the other side of grief.” It has not been an easy road, but it was one that we had to travel in order to discover wholeness and find the “new normal” that defines the rest of our lives.

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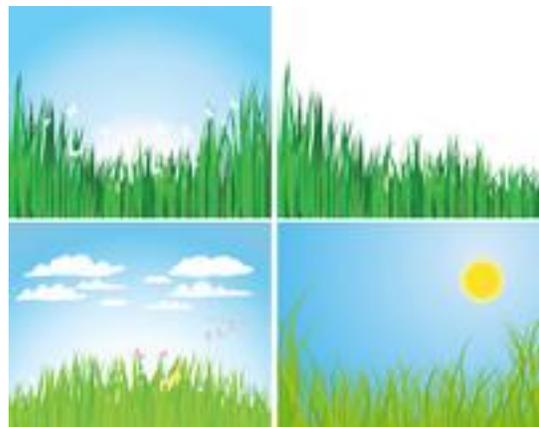
**Cont. from col 1.**

Yes, this was the ninth conference we have attended. People ask “why?” “Why do you continue to be part of The Compassionate Friends?” The answer is easy. The people are fabulous. No one cares what kind of house you live in or what kind of work you do. They care about YOU and the grief you bare. They want to HEAR your story and KNOW YOUR CHILD and SEE his/her picture on the picture board. Their compassion is genuine. They ask how you are because they really want to know. The world tells us to “be over it.” The Compassionate Friends, whether it is a local meeting or national conference, affirms and validates YOUR unique grief. TCF is a safe place where you can say anything, cry or not cry, laugh or not laugh, do whatever you want (without causing harm to self or others) without explanation. In addition, the workshops are excellent. The speakers are phenomenal. As hospital and hospice chaplains we have benefited in recent years from the professional day workshops, where we have learned new ways to bring hope to those who have experienced the death of a child of any age.

Ten years after Anna’s death, we continue to attend the National Conference. A high percentage of those who attend are quite newly bereaved, two years or less. On the final evening as we are gathered together in the banquet hall, I look around the room at the hundreds of people in attendance. There is an overwhelming amount of pain in that huge room. Yet, as one by one the candles are lit during the service of remembrance, there is also an enormous amount of hope. Within this family of TCF, bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents find assurance that their child will remain in their hearts forever and that one day life can be good again.

All of my Compassionate Friends are high on my list of those to whom I express my deepest thanks for helping to rekindle the light that went out for me the day my daughter died. It is the vision of The Compassionate Friends that “everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.” Won’t you please give us a try—no matter the age of your child or cause of death or how long it has been, we want you to know that “you need not walk alone” on this life-long journey, and that your child is forever loved and remembered.

*Paula Funk  
TCF Safe Harbor Chapter, MI  
In loving memory of my daughter, Anna*



**OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED**

“They may be deceased by a few days or years, but we still miss them so much and still shed our tears.”

<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Child’s name</b>	<b>Parent’s name(s)</b>	<b>Cause</b>
08/01	Madigan Rose Johnson	Thomas/Brigette Johnson	
08/03	Katherine Graves Morgan	David Morgan	Auto fire (died w/ mom)
08/03	Kirk Cliburn	Roy/Joy Cliburn	Cancer
08/06	Evander Carter	DeBorah Rhodes	Unknown
08/06	Mitch Giles	Aden Giles	Drug Overdose
08/07	Matthew Greer	Dave/Charlotte Greer	
08/09	Glovelis “Pat” Wells	Joan McDaniel	Auto accident
08/09	Jesse Allen Gates	Bob/Joy Gates	
08/10	Bradford Dale Houston	Nora Pinter	Unknown
08/13	Maura Anne Gray-Lewis	Vic/Gerry Gray-Lewis	Natural Causes
08/13	Stephen Michael Goode	Debbie/Roy Goode	Kidnapped/murdered
08/16	Matthias Kenneth Bert	Jack/Dorothy Bert	Hit by pedestrian
08/16	Tykeria-Nicole Parish Patterson	Vicky Patterson	Premature
08/18	Clinton Patrick Hegwood III	Dr./Mrs. Pat Hegwood	Cancer
08/18	Anthony Ray Norwood	Helen C. Griffin	Mouth Cancer
08/22	Keandra Jaree McMorris	Kornella S. McMorris	Suicide
08/22	Jessica Rainey	Sandra Grice	Suicide
08/23	Carl Gustav “Gus” Evers	Jan Evers	Suicide
08/23	Lily Ann Parrish	Hannah Parrish	SIDS
08/25	Sandy Moak	Jake/Frances Moak	Hypertension
08/26	Hunter Michael Baker	Stephanie Baker	Accidental electrocution
08/26	Hunter (GC) Baker	Paulette Strayham	Accidental electrocution
08/26	Kurt McCurdy	Ms. Christina McCurdy	Car accident
08/26	Lucius Andrew Tyson, III	Judy S. Tyson	Heart Condition
08/28	Emmanuel D. Ealy	Mary Horton	
08/28	Melissa Lisa Pigg	Rick/Mary C. Pickens	Cancer
08/29	James Matthew “Matt” Kitchens	Michael/Karen Hall	Auto accident
08/29	Hope Lashna Norris	Tammy Banks	Auto accident
08/31	Timothy Meyers	Peter Meyers	
08/31	Lucas Arthur	Basil/Yolanda Arthur	Auto accident

**In Memory of Bob Gates**

We were shocked and saddened to learn of the recent death of one of our active members of our chapter, Bob Gates. Bob was an extremely talented guitarist and shared his professional abilities with us at our annual candle lighting ceremony each year and along with his wife, Joy sang and played their guitars at our annual balloon lift-off as well. We offer our deepest sympathies to Joy, to their family and to Bob's many friends. Bob was well-known among many other musicians locally and nationally. There are just no words to describe how very much we will miss Bob and how dearly we all loved him, nor how much we grieve along with Joy. Bob and Joy came to us after losing their precious son, Jesse and it didn't take long for both of them to become active in our group and cherished friends as well. To Joy, we say, "We hope you know how much we admired Bob and how very much we will miss him. We are here for you, so lean on us, dear friend when you need us." And to Bob, we say, "Rest in peace, our beloved friend, Jesse's dad."



**OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED**

Heaven	Child's name	Parent's name(s)	Cause
08/01	Evander Carter	DeBorah Rhodes	Unknown
08/01	Madigan Rose Johnson	Thomas/Brigette Johnson	
08/02	Frank "Will" William Johnson	Shirley Johnson Sarris	Auto accident
08/03	Larkin Powers Honea	Dickey/Breck Honea	Suicide
08/03	Janet Susan Johnston	Aron/Barbara Johnston	Suicide/depression
08/05	Roger Savell II	Brenda Crumbley	Stroke
08/05	John Wayne McFarland	John/Julia McFarland	Suicide
08/07	Kimberly Ann Kessler	John Kessler	Murder
08/08	Laura Ann Clement	Bill/Hallie Clement	Complications/Chrun's
08/09	James Matthew "Matt" Kitchens	Michael/Karen Hall	Auto accident
08/09	Sarah Louise Hollis	Jim/Linda Hollis	Auto accident
08/10	Parker Rodenbaugh	Rick/Cordie Rodenbaugh	Accident
08/12	Christopher Scott Brandies	Martha T. Wiggins	Suicide
08/12	Joseph Latham	Sam/Rita Latham	Cancer
08/14	Jessica Leigh Ann Windmiller	Robert/Donna Windmiller	Automobile accident
08/14	Moak Nathan Shane	April Moak	Suicide
08/14	Glovelis "Pat" Wells	Joan McDaniel	Auto accident
08/14	Jesse Arron Griffing	Eddy/Rebecca Griffing	Suicide
08/16	Houston Wells, Jr.	Mrs. Jean Wells	Gunshot wound
08/17	Marilyn Yvonne Bennett-Roberts	Walterine Bennett	
08/17	Scotti Lynn Mooney	Jill Calendar	Auto accident
08/18	Tykeria-Nicole Parish Patterson	Vicky Patterson	Premature
08/18	Deanna Boyd Knight	Wilma Davis	Leukemia
08/19	Marjorie Mae Bowen	Gerald/Norma Jean Kimbel	Accidental drowning
08/20	Abbie Gatewood	Brandie Nicole Cambell	Cancer
08/20	Zachery Powell	Jackie S. Stanford	Overdose
08/21	Sherrri Lynn Smith	Odie/Patsy Smith	Thrown from truck
08/21	Jamel Jackson	Rosie Martin (relation)	Drowning
08/21	Jamel Dequan Jackson	Doris Martin Jackson	Drowning
08/24	James Daniel Bruce	Knight/Patricia Bruce	Accidental gunshot
08/26	Andrea Santana Brown	Pamela Brown	
08/28	Kirk Cliburn	Roy/Joy Cliburn	Cancer
08/28	Steven B. Cutrer	Ricky/Brenda Cutrer	Heart attack
08/29	Matthias Kenneth Bert	Jack/Dorothy Bert	Hit by pedestrian
08/30	Benjamin Quin (Ben) Greer	Willey/Beth Greer	Auto accident
08/31	Hope Lashanna Norris	Tammy Banks	Auto accident
08/31	Anthony Ray Norwood	Helen C. Griffin	Mouth Cancer

**REPLY FORM—IMPORTANT**

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be on the "special days" list, you must fill out this form, which gives us permission to list this information.

I/We are ( ) bereaved Parents ( ) grandparents ( ) siblings ( ) step-parents ( ) friends ( ) relatives ( ) professional  
 Please ( ) add ( ) remove ( ) keep me on the mailing list.  
 Remember my ( ) Child ( ) Sibling ( ) Grandchild on Special Days. Please ( ) have someone call me.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_  
 Age when deceased \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cause\* \_\_\_\_\_  
 Child's Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Heaven \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*You need not list cause of death. We ask this only so that parents whose children have died in similar ways may reach one another.

Optional: Your donations are tax deductible and allow us to reach to other bereaved parents.  
 Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ given in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my contribution used to fund: Check one: \_\_\_\_\_ Postage \_\_\_\_\_ Children's Memorial \_\_\_\_\_ Love Gift  
 Mail to: The Compassionate Friends; P.O. Box 1396; Jackson, Mississippi; 39215-1396