



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



Newsletter

Volume 41 No. 6 June 2020

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

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

Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husband's this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

*Doug Hughes
TCF Cincinnati, OH
In Memory of my son, Alex*



TCF MEETINGS

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

Dear all,
We're still practicing social distancing and sheltering at home. Please stay safe.

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.

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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

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**MS SIDS ALLIANCE INFANT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP**

Monthly 1<sup>st</sup> 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



*"I'd prefer to err on the side of caution."*

*~Dr. Fauci*

**GRIEVING DURING THIS ISOLATING VIRUS**

I can say without reservation that the years spent grieving the loss of my daughter, daily missing her presence, created a loneliness harsher than anything I could ever have imagined. Now, throw in an isolating, disruptive virus floating through our cities and towns, large and small.

With sixteen years of grieving experience on my “life resume,” my attention over the past few weeks has turned to moms and dads who are “new grievers,” those trying to navigate fresh grief when everything in the country – even planning a funeral or memorial service – is out of working order. You have many concerns and worries. My prayers, carried deeply in my soul, are for your comfort.

Maybe you have other people physically in your presence, or like me, you are at home alone. I’m kind of tired of hearing people whine about how tough it is to be “stuck at home” with their kids, coming up with clever ideas and innovative activities to get through this terrible time of being at home with the family.

Now, I’m not minimizing the challenges of setting up school at home and feeding hungry people all day long, believe me. I just wish these people on TV and dancing happily across electronic screens doing chores in their kitchens and cooking in the backyard had any idea of how very fortunate they are. Many parents are living in agony and would give anything and everything to have had more days, months, years with their precious children – even when they were aggravating the heck out of you. It’s impossible to communicate these feelings to anyone who has not lost a child, so I’m trusting you with my thoughts.

Right now you are dealing with the sorrow and isolation of today. Don’t look past today – today is enough. Take yourself outside for a while. If possible, take a short walk – it might turn into a longer walk when you realize walking helps to air out your feelings a little. This is a time to put yourself first when possible, as hard as that may be. Sit down with a book even if you can’t read more than a few pages. Eat something though you don’t feel hungry. (I had some popcorn and a bite of chocolate cake for breakfast, so who am I to be giving advice on nutrition?) Take a quick ride through a drive-through for a cold drink, some small treat to break up the day. Settle down with meditation or prayer though you feel as though you can’t focus. Try something for just a short time to calm your soul. My motto through the years has been “make the bed.” What???? To me that means to accomplish some small task, some little job that puts just a jot of order and routine to my day. It helped me emotionally and psychologically to pull back the covers on the bed each night rather than toss around in a tangled mess. I would think – I’ve made it through a day – now I can leave it behind and see what happens tomorrow.

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**Cont. from col 1**

You may feel like you are doing better in isolation. I have those times too. But, as you have already likely learned, time can turn on you in an instant, compounding your grief, isolation and loneliness. Reach out through Compassionate Friends to the other moms and dads who are struggling and who know your walk. Listen to what they are living. And, here’s something you may not have thought about – you are helping someone else when you have honest conversation with another grieving parent. When you become able to soothe someone else’s pain, you will recognize that your own healing has begun. It’s a privilege to share your pain.

**CAROL THOMPSON**

*Carol Thompson of Tyler, Texas is the mother of Sarah Kathryn Thompson who died in a 2005 pedestrian hit-and-run. Carol is a member of the local Compassionate Friends chapter, which serves East Texans, and finds healing in writing about the everyday-life aspects of living with grief after the death of a beloved child.*

**When Fathers Weep at Graves**

I see them weep  
the fathers at the stones

taking off the brave armor  
forced to wear in the workplace

clearing away the debris  
with gentle fingers

inhaling the sorrow  
diminished by anguish

their hearts desiring  
what they cannot have--

to walk hand in hand  
with children no longer held--

to all the fathers who leave a part  
of their hearts at the stones

may breezes underneath trees of time  
ease their pain

as they receive healing tears  
...the gift the children give.

*Alice J. Wisler*

*For David, in memory of our son Daniel*

**Please See Me Through My Tears**

You asked, "How are you doing?"  
As I told you, tears came to my eyes...and you  
looked away and quickly began to talk again, All the  
attention you had given me drained away.

"How am I doing?"...I can do better when people  
listen,  
though I may shed a tear or two.  
This pain is indescribable. If you've never known it you  
cannot fully understand.  
Yet I need you.  
When you look away,  
When I'm ignored,  
I am again alone with it.  
Your attention means more than you can ever know.

Really, tears are not a bad sign, you know!  
They're nature's way of helping me heal...  
They relieve some of the stress of sadness.

I know you fear that asking how I'm doing brings me  
sadness ...  
but you're wrong.  
The memory of my loved one's death will always be  
with me,  
Only a thought away.  
My tears make my pain more visible to you, but you  
did not give me the pain...it was already there.

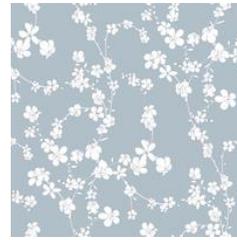
When I cry, could it be that you feel helpless, not  
knowing what to do?  
You are not helpless,  
and you don't need to do a thing but be there.  
When I feel your permission to allow my tears to flow,  
you've helped me.  
You need not speak. Your silence as I cry is all I need.  
Be patient...do not fear.

Listening with your heart to "how I am doing"  
relieves the pain,  
for when the tears can freely come and go, I feel  
lighter,  
Talking to you releases what I've been wanting to say  
aloud,  
clearing space  
for a touch of joy in my life.

I'll cry for a minute or two...  
and then I'll wipe my eyes,  
and sometime you'll even find I'm laughing later.  
When I hold back the tears, my throat grows tight,  
my chest aches, my stomach knots...  
because I'm trying to protect you from my tears.  
Then we both hurt...me, because my pain is held  
inside,  
a shield against our closeness...and you,  
because suddenly we're distant.

So please, take my hand and see me through my  
tears...  
then we can be close again.

*Kelly Osmont*



**PICTURES FROM THE HEART**

Since we have lost our children, part of what  
remains of them are pictures from the heart, which  
are those mental images we hold so dear. For some  
of us these pictures are memories of what had been,  
and for others these pictures are dreams of what  
might have been. And for some of us these pictures  
are a little of both. For us, dreams and memories are  
really the same. It is the dimension where our  
children now reside.

In a sense, dreams are nothing more than memories  
of the future, because we remember our children by  
the dreams we had for them; and memories are  
nothing more than dreams of the past, because to  
remember them is certainly to dream of them. I  
believe it is incorrect to think that someone will not  
hurt as much because they only had their child for a  
little while or to think that someone will not hurt as  
much because their child had the chance to grow  
up. In these dreams and memories, these pictures  
from the heart, all of our children are infants and all  
of our children have grown up. The sadness and  
pain comes from the broken heart, the memories  
and the dreams from the pieces that remain.

Kenneth Hensley  
TCF Nashville, TN



**Father's Love**

Father weighed us once a month  
And totaled up the pounds  
Then he weighed the dog and cat  
(As silly as that sounds)  
He then included their weight, too,  
And with pride and joy he'd say,  
"Hmm. Yes. I do believe  
Here's what we have today"  
There's thirty-five and forty-eight  
And Jim weighs eighty-nine,  
Spot and Puss weigh twenty-four  
And all these pounds are mine!"  
Father loved us not by age  
Nor virtues that he found  
He gathered all his children in  
And loved us by the pound.

*Dee L. McCollum*  
*TCF Atlanta, GA*  
*1st Prize Light Verse Award*

**I'm Beginning**

I'm beginning to know your children  
 From the things I heard you tell.  
 From the pictures that you've brought here  
 I think I know them well  
 Our hurt and sorrow are immense  
 I'm not sure where to start.  
 Compassion after all is  
 Your Pain in my heart.  
 My thanks to you for listening  
 To words wrung from my soul.  
 We are The Compassionate Friends  
 That's all I need to know.

*Jack Brown  
 TCF Louisville*



**The Old Yellow Truck**

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: *For Sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles—as is \$450. Call.*

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away—all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read:

*For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations preselected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.*

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things—even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

\There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

*Gary Piepenbring  
 TCF Penn-Maryland Line Chapter, MD*

**IT'S OKAY**

**It's Okay to Grieve:**

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.

**It's Okay to Cry:**

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to "level off" and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

**It's Okay to Heal:**

We do not need to "prove" we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel "guilty," for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

**It's Okay to Laugh:**

Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

*Marianne Waite  
 TCF El Paso, TX*



**This Day**

Sunshine after a week of hiding  
 The grey skies suited my general mood  
 I reach out and catch  
 Solitude and loneliness  
 Years reach place of sorrow  
 Stunning it its solidness  
 A monument of tears  
 Add a brick to build it up  
 I feel so utterly alone sometimes  
 My eyes flicker strange retreats  
 How is it that I search past the moon  
 In such a way  
 I'm falling  
 But  
 The hole in my heart is forever.

*Melissa Anne Schroeter  
 TCF Rockland County, NY  
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 reprint granted by the author*

**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>        |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 06/01             | Carrick Johnson            | Thomas/Brigette Johnson |                     |
| 06/02             | Angela Nicole Smith        | Brenda/Bobby Smith      | Auto accident       |
| 06/03             | Christina (Cris) Mann      | Peggy Phillips          | Cancer              |
| 06/05             | Ted Jensen                 | David/Marilyn Jensen    | Septicemia          |
| 06/11             | Kathleen M. Peck           | John/Pat Schnell        | Cancer              |
| 06/11             | Bryan “Keith” Barr         | Deborah Barr Holden     | Cardiac arrest      |
| 06/13             | Russell “Rusty” Wilkins    | Jimmy/Barbara Wilkins   | Heart Disease       |
| 06/13             | Ebony Jones                | Mary West               | Died in sleep       |
| 06/14             | Robert (Bob) Hester        | Bill/Cherlyn Hester     | Suicide             |
| 06/15             | Baby Johnson               | Marquita W. Johnson     | Miscarriage         |
| 06/20             | Christopher Idowu          | Micheline Idowu         | Stillborn           |
| 06/20             | Christopher Emmanuel Idowu | Phyllis Stringer        | Stillborn           |
| 06/22             | Kristi Kay Brandon         | Gary/Wanda Brandon      | Auto accident       |
| 06/22             | Tommy Levine               | Karen L. Thomas         | Auto accident       |
| 06/23             | Tyler Allen (T-Bug) Hinson | Albert/Shelly Hinson    | Suicide             |
| 06/24             | Gina Hawthorne Sumrall     | Ed/Susie Hawthorne      | Car accident        |
| 06/24             | Maxine Elizabeth Melichar  | Scott/Emily Melichar    | Stillborn           |
| 06/25             | Ashley Curt Buchanan       | Ed/Carolyn Buchanan     | Suicide             |
| 06/26             | Morgan Aaron Rodgers       | Dennis/Darline Rodgers  | Accidental shooting |
| 06/28             | Reed Hickman               | Steve/Jan Lemmons       | Suicide             |
| 06/28             | Timothy Lance “Tim” Rooker | Sylvia Little           | Hit on motorcycle   |
| 06/30             | Benjamin Quin (Ben) Greer  | Wiley/Beth Greer        | Auto accident       |

## Healing and Hope

For a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, “It’s different with me! You don’t understand!” This is the “normal” response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.

Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child’s death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of “Why?”

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary), that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought gone forever. Each one must use one’s spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return—return not occur, although the term “recovery” is used. I prefer the term “healing,” a process whereby our lives come to a new “normal.” Healing implies (a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and (b) our slowly learning to resume productive relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!! One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time! Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child’s death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when we recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that’s all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

*Robert Gloor*  
ppTCF Tuscaloosa, AL

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

| Heaven Date | Child's name                 | Parent's name(s)           | Cause               |
|-------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 06/04       | William Armstead Tate        | Eleanor Tate Crowell       |                     |
| 06/05       | Jennifer Shelby Clark        | Bette Clark                | Auto accident       |
| 06/07       | Britton Grant                | Alma Lewis                 | Accidental overdose |
| 06/10       | Corenelius L. Rice           | Willie "Bill" Rice         |                     |
| 06/12       | Eric Hegwood                 | Janice Berlin              |                     |
| 06/15       | Baby Johnson                 | Marquita W. Johnson        | Miscarriage         |
| 06/17       | Matthew Carson Pounders      | Dustin Kenneth Pounders    | Auto accident       |
| 06/18       | Matthew Brandies             | Martha T. Wiggins          | Suicide             |
| 06/19       | Andrew C. "Andy" Franklin    | Mr./Mrs. Homer C. Franklin | Jeep accident       |
| 06/20       | Christopher Emmanuel Idowu   | Phyllis Stringer           | Stillborn           |
| 06/20       | Christopher Idowu            | Micheline Idowu            | Stillborn           |
| 06/21       | John Robert "Robby" Barnette | Donna Barnette             | Motorcycle accident |
| 06/21       | David T. (Brother) Gentry    | Dr. Glen/Betty Gentry      | Stroke              |
| 06/23       | Sandy Moak                   | Jake/Frances Moak          | Hypertension        |
| 06/23       | Michael Alan McNally         | Ann/Robert McNally         | Suicide             |
| 06/24       | Maxine Elizabeth Melichar    | Scott/Emily Melichar       | Stillborn           |
| 06/27       | Michael Ellis Blount         | Ellis/Lynda Blount         | Leukemia            |
| 06/28       | Jasen Nathaniel Rodgers      | Shanna/Chuck Rodgers       | Motorcycle accident |

**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

