



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



Newsletter

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POSTAGE

PAUL BROOME in memory of CYNTHIA BROOME

ED and CAROLYN BUCHANAN in memory of ASHELY BUCHANAN

JERRY and CINDY WIGGLESWORTH in memory of LEE WIGGLESWORTH

LOVE GIFT

CHUCK and MARLISA PRESTWOOD in memory of KRISHNA " KRISSY " PRESTWOOD

LYNDA F. GARY in memory of PATTI LYNN GARY (Birthday 03/01)

NORA PINTER in memory BRADFORD DALE HOUSTON (Heaven date 03/01)

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They are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

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TCF JACKSON CHAPTER NEWS	TCF MEETINGS
<p>The weather last night was raining as usual, so we had a small group of 13 people present with one newcomer. We were glad she was there, but so sorry for the reason why. Our chapter leader, Marcia Leteroff opened our meeting with announcements and welcomed everyone. Special days were read by Marcia and Joy Gates. We remember those whose children had birthdays and heaven dates during this month. There is always some children on the lists whose parents we know and we never want to have a meeting without remembering those parents during this hard time.</p> <p>Our meeting began by a parent sharing some valentines that were special to her; some her child had made and some that were given to him as a child. She also read a letter from a friend written to her son. These were such special and sweet memories. She also shared about how we can order a necklace with our child's picture on it by going online to "Pictures on Gold".</p> <p>Sharing from everyone followed about how we are coping with our grief and how TCF meetings help so much. It gives us a chance to share openly with those who understand. Everyone grieves differently and some don't like to talk about their grief, but everyone likes to share about how special their child was. There was sharing about the cause of our children's deaths and how much harder it can be when there was a violent death that involves police, court cases, etc. Some of these cases never get solved, so it adds another painful dimension to those parent's grief.</p> <p>We are there to listen and to care no matter how old the child is or what their cause of death is, or what race, culture, or religion. Grief over the loss of a child is different from all other losses and lasts as long as we live. We learn from hearing from others and it helps us to carry on.</p> <p>Thanks to those who came and shared and to those who brought the refreshments.</p> <p>~~~~~</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not the Same</p> <p>He was a very nice man, like so many others, and yet he was so different. His quick smile and gentle ways were like those of others and yet, he was so uncommon. He was kind and loving with unshakable faith like others, and yet he was so unique. He was a dutiful soldier who gave his life like many others, and yet he was so special. The same as others? No Not to those who knew and loved him. He was himself, an individual, and he was my brother!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Pam Miller Farrell TCF Evansville, IL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2nd Tuesdays monthly at 7:00 p.m. Fondren Presbyterian Church – Fellowship Hall 3220 Old Canton Road, Jackson, MS</p> <p>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.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Meeting</u></p> <p>Meeting: Tuesday, - 7:00 p.m. March 10th, 7:00 pm Fondren Presbyterian Church.</p> <p>This is our Potluck Dinner where we bring one of our child's favorite foods to share. It will also be a time to share a memory with the group if you would like to do that. One of our members brought McDonald's hamburgers because her son always bought those and handed them out to the homeless.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please Come!</p> <p>*****</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Prenatal Bereavement Support Group</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">*1st Wednesday/ Noon UMC Cong. Ctr. Jackson Medical Mall For more information, call Kelly Hinson @ 601-815-7096</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*If the meeting date falls on a holiday—the following Wednesday</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>For Children Grieving the Death of a Loved One</u></p> <p>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</p> <p>~~~~~</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>MS SIDS ALLIANCE INFANT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monthly 1st Tuesday – 7:00 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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</p> <div data-bbox="1084 2161 1273 2349" style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Newsletter folding: Saturday, February 22nd @ 4:00 pm at the Church.</p>

To a man who recently lost his family, wife and six children in a house fire.

I need to tell you that, in the face of significant loss, we don't "recover" from grief.

Yes, I'm using the royal "we" because you and I are all a part of this club.

I also need to tell you that that *not* recovering from grief doesn't doom you to a life of despair. Let me reassure you, there are millions of people out there, right now, living normal and purposeful lives while also experiencing ongoing grief.

All the things you've heard about getting over grief, going back to normal, and moving on – they are misrepresentations of what it means to love someone who has died. I'm sorry, I know us human-people appreciate things like closure and resolution, but this isn't how grief goes.

This isn't to say that "recovery" doesn't have a place in grief – it's simply 'what' we're recovering from that needs to be redefined. To "recover" means to return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength, and as many would attest, when someone very significant dies, we never return to a pre-loss "normal". The loss, the person who died, our grief – they all get integrated into our lives and they profoundly change how we live and experience the world.

What will, hopefully, return to a general baseline is the level of intense emotion, stress, and distress that a person experiences in the weeks and months following their loss. So perhaps we recover from the intense distress of grief, but we don't recover from the grief itself.

Now you could say that I'm getting caught up in semantics, but sometimes semantics matter. Especially when trying to describe an experience that, for so many, is unfamiliar and frightening. Grief is one of those experiences you can never fully understand until you actually experience it and, until that time, all a person has to go on is what they've observed and what they've been told.

The words we use to label and describe grief matter and, in many ways, these words have been getting us into trouble for decades. In the context of grief, words like denial, detachment, unresolved, recovery, and acceptance (to name a few) could be interpreted many different ways and some of these interpretations offer false impressions and false promises.

Interestingly, when many of these words were first used by grief theorists starting in the early 20th century their intent was to help *describe* grief. I have no doubt that in the contexts in which they were working, these words and their operational definitions were useful and effective. It's when these descriptions reach our broader society without explanation or nuance, or when they are misapplied by those who position themselves as experts – that they go terribly awry.

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So going back to the beginning, we don't recover from grief after the loss of someone significant. Grief is born when someone significant dies – and as long as that person remains significant – grief will remain.

Ongoing grief is normal, not dysfunctional. It's also not dysfunctional to experience unpleasant grief-related thoughts and emotions from time-to-time sometimes even years later. Humans are meant to experience both sides of the emotional spectrum – not just the warm and fuzzy half. As grieving people, this is especially true. Where there are things like love, appreciation, and fond memory, there will also be sadness, yearning, and pain. And though these experiences seem in opposition to one another, we can experience them all at the same time.

Sure, people may push you to stop feeling the pain, but this is misguided. If the pain exists, it makes sense, because there will never come a day when you won't wish for one more moment, one more conversation, one last hello, or one last goodbye. You learn to live with these wishes and you learn to accept that they won't come true – not here on Earth – but you don't stop wishing for them.

And let me reassure you, experiencing pain doesn't negate the potential for healing. With constructive coping and maybe a little support, the intensity of your distress will lessen and your healing will evolve over time. Though there will be many ups and downs, you should eventually reach a place where you're having just as many good days as bad...and then perhaps more good days than bad...until one day you may find that your bad grief days are few and far between.

But the grief, it's always there, like an old injury that aches when it rains. And though this prospect may be scary in the early days of grief, I think in time you'll find that you wouldn't have it any other way. Grief is an expression of love – these things grow from the same seed. Grief becomes a part of how we love a person despite their physical absence; it helps connect us to memories of the past; it bonds us with others through our shared humanity, and it helps provide perspective on our immense capacity for finding strength and wisdom in the most difficult of times.

Thank you to Marcia Leteroff for forwarding this letter to us.



"Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually that is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish."

Letter from Sigmund Freud to Ludwig Binswanger, April 11, 1929

As I Sit in Heaven

As I sit in Heaven and watch you everyday
 I try to let you know with signs
 I never went away
 I hear you when you're laughing
 And watch you as you sleep
 I even place my arms around you
 To calm you as you weep
 I see you wish the days away
 Begging to have me home
 So I try to send you signs
 So you know you're not alone
 Don't feel guilty that you have a life
 That was denied to me
 Heaven is truly beautiful
 Just you wait and see
 So live your life,
 Laugh again, enjoy yourself, be free
 Then I know with every breath you take
 You'll be taking on for me...

*Nora Pinter TCF/Jackson, MS
 In Memory of my son, Brad Houston
 August 10 – March 1*



Just So You Know

I can't stop grieving just because you believe it is time for me to move on.

I can't stop hurting just because you don't understand the piercing pain in my heart.

I can't stop my tears from flowing just because they make you uncomfortable.

My heart is not suddenly mended just because you believe that I have grieved long enough.

I will grieve the loss of my loved one the rest of my life!

Just so you know.

*Nora Pinter TCF/Jackson, MS
 In Memory of my son, Brad Houston
 August 10 – March 1*



Angels Among Us

Our Angels are among us
 We see them everyday
 In all the forms that God created...
 They are with us along life's way.

We see them in the sunrise,
 That brightens and warms our soul.
 We feel them in the summer breeze
 That chases away our cold.

They are there among the flowers...
 Their sweet scent a memory of love.
 They soar with the eagles,
 As they fly so high above.

The night will find them in the stars,
 Lighting our path below.
 And even in our dreams,
 Their presence we'll still know.

As the snow melts with the sun,
 And spring flowers peek through their beds,
 They come on the wings of butterflies,
 And flutter about our heads.

They are telling us they are with us,
 And will be forever more...
 Until it's time for us to meet again,
 As we pass through heaven's door.

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
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Tribute to Adam

Because of you,
 We have started organizations.
 We have reached out to others.
 We have changed laws.
 We have gotten involved.

Because of you,
 We are not afraid.
 We have gained compassion.
 We have walked the valley of the shadow of death.
 We have loved and we have cried.

Because of you,
 We have gained strength and wisdom.
 We have faith.
 We have hope for a better world.
 We have been blessed,
 Because of you.

*Keith and Wendy Downen
 In Memory of our son, Adam Downen*

Note: 18-year old Adam Downen was killed in Knoxville, Tennessee on May 21, 2000, the night after his high school graduation, after attending a keg party hosted by the parents of a fellow graduate.

The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.

That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then . . . IT happened.

Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed.

My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with "spring." If H.G. Well's time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn't fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn't go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

*Pat Loder
TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI
In Memory of Stephanie and Stephen Loder*

To My Husband

Your tears flow within your heart,
Mine flow down my cheeks.

Your anger lies with thoughts and movements.
Mine gallops forward for all to see.

Your despair shows in your now dull eyes.
Mine shows in line after written line.

You grieve over the death of your son,
I grieve over the death of my baby.

But we're still the same, still one,
Only we grieve at different times,

Over different memories,
and at different lengths.

Yet we both realize the death of our child.

*Pam Burden
TCF, Augusta, GA*



Silent Stories

Somehow they press against the windowpane of
your mind.

Tales of wanting
Tales of longing
Tales of grief.

A drumbeat,
Heartbeat,
Calling out loss.

But
We remember.

But
We still love.

We will not be silent
We will speak their names,

Always,
We will love them,
Forever.

*Melissa Anne Schroeter
TCF Rockland County, NY
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“They may be deceased by a few days or years, but we still miss them so much and still shed our tears.”

Birth Date	Child’s name	Parent’s name(s)	Cause
03/01	Patti Lynn Gary	Ms. Lynda F. Gary	Auto accident
03/01	Rashard Hamiton	Andre Barker	Cardiac arrest
03/02	John Wayne McFarland	John/Julia McFarland	Suicide
03/03	Clayton Marble	France Marble	Cancer
03/04	Bryan Demond Hollins	Hattie Hollins	Homocide
03/09	Kevin Lefteroff	Marcia Lefteroff	Car wreck
03/11	Chad Aaron Pigg	Rick/Mary C. Pickens	Accidental gunshot
03/12	Lee Bailey Wigglesworth	Cindy/Jerry Wigglesworth	Drug overdose
03/12	John Robert “Robby” Barnette	Donna Barnette	Motorcycle accident
03/12	Sarah Louise Hollis	Jim/Linda Hollis	Auto accident
03/14	Scotti Lynn Mooney	Jill Calendar	Auto accident
03/15	Peck Cranston	Suzie/Phillip Cranston	Suicide
03/16	Brendan Chase Roberts	Deborah Roberts	Auto accident
03/17	Bryant Shanks	Dean/Pat Shanks	Auto accident
03/18	Britney Gail Brinlee	Reba Gail Walker	Accidental overdose
03/18	Britney Gail Brinlee	Belinda Woolard	Accidental overdose
03/19	Walter A. Booker	Tom/Gretel Ekbaum	Hit/run/Easter Sunday
03/20	Ross Allan Hailey	Ben/Charlotte Hailey	Suicide
03/23	Justin Lloyd Hartley	Ron/Terry Hartley	Cardiac Arrest
03/25	Deanna Boyd Knight	Wilma Davis	Leukemia
03/25	Herb Rothman (sibling)	Marie Rothman	Heart problem
03/28	George “Eddie” Chapman, Jr.	George/Emma Chapman	Vehicle accident
03/28	Walker Woodward	Nathan/Sherrri Woodward	SIDS
03/28	Sean Michael Thomas	Denise Douglas	Seizure
03/30	Michael Ward	Melody Vaughn	Cancer
03/31	Lance Darryl Wroten	Bruce Wroten	Auto accident
03/31	Walker (GP’S) Woodward	Tobey/Raymond Sherwood	SIDS

What Is Left?

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive, intelligent son has chosen to end his life. What can be left after such a crushing blow?

Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives and friends. They are all left. Perhaps you have a career that is left. And yet how meaningless all of those are to a bereaved parent, to one who is suffering the most devastating loss of all. So you continue to search for what it is that is left.

You read books on bereavement scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate you have one or two good friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it? Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answer the questions of what is left?

For me it does. The answer was 13 months in coming, but how clear it seems now. I am left. That’s it! I *am* left and I have been left with the love of Scott. It is a new love, it is different, more intense, it is undemanding, it need not be reciprocated, there are no strings attached. I love this love of Scott’s. It warms me and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It would be wrong to do so; this love is too precious to keep to myself.

I am left with love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. He will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer! I am left to share Scott’s love with you.

*Betty Stevens
TCF Baltimore, MD
In Memory of my son, Scott*

Heaven Date	Child's name	Parent's name(s)	Cause
03/01	Clinton Patrick Hegwood III	Dr./Mrs. Pat Hegwood	Cancer
03/01	Bradford Dale Houston	Vora Pinter	Unknown
03/01	Bryant Shanks	Dean/Pat Shanks	Auto Accident
03/03	Jesse Allen Gates	Bob/Joy Gates	
03/04	Dean Allen McGhee	Chick/Nancy McGhee	Auto Accident
03/07	Jason Douglas Beard	Mary Pierce	
03/07	Michael Pham	Hal Lindsey Pham	Murder
03/07	Michael Pham	Gerry/Victor Gray-Lewis	Murder
03/08	Shamburger Jimmy	Vicki Shamburger	Suicide
03/12	David Vantrease, Jr.	Leah Wheelless	Suicide
03/15	Susan Michelle Ware Canoy	Ted/Mary Joe Ware	Lung clot
03/18	Scott (Scotty) Austin Reese	Layla Reese	Drug Overdose
03/19	Peck Cranston	Suzie/Phillip Cranston	Suicide
09/19	Shannon C. McNeil	Bob/Jeanette McNeil	Murder
03/24	Kristi Kay Brandon	Gary/Wanda Brandon	Auto Accident
03/24	Mitch Giles	Aden Giles	Drug Overdose
03/24	Carrie Lee Elliott	Dottie D. Elliott	Suicide
03/25	John E. Brown, Jr.	Vincent/Dawn Venturini	Auto Accident
03/26	Kyle Horn	Julie Diaz	Drug Overdose
03/26	Dalton Proctor	Michael/Tammy Proctor	Suicide
03/26	Daniel "Dan" Yates	Harry Larue/Marilyn Yates	Homicide
03/31	Andre' Conway	Sigrid Conway	Suicide/Depression

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

