



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS GREATER OMAHA CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

P.O. Box 540852, Omaha, NE 68154 www.tcfomaha.org
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May/June 2011

The Mission of the Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

MEETINGS/REUNIONES

PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS & ADULT SIBLINGS

7:00 p.m. — 1st Thursday of the month

New Cassel Retirement Center

900 N. 90th Street — Auditorium Level 2, Omaha, NE

May 5th - Birthdays and Anniversaries - Bring a memory book or photos of a memorial project

June 2nd - Mothers only/Fathers only - Separate discussion Groups - bring a linking object

July 7th—Alan Wolfelt Touchstone 2 - Dispel Misconceptions About Grief

REUNION EN ESPAÑOL/MEETING IN SPANISH

7:00 pm-3er miércoles de cada mes/3rd Wed. of every month

One World Community Health Center Conference Room

4920 S. 30th Street, Omaha NE

Kelly 712-326-4308

Miércoles/Wednesday - 19 May/Mayo

Miércoles/Wednesday - 16 June/Junio

Miércoles/Wednesday - 21 July/Julio

Esta hoja informativa es para todos nosotros.

Si, Ud. tiene un niño o conoce a un niño que falleció y quiere
'compartir un poema o algo que escribió.

Porfavor enviario a la direccion:

correo@tcfomaha.org

DAYTIME MEETING



3rd Tuesday of the month at noon. Join us for
lunch at Tish's restaurant.

1115 S 35 Street, Council Bluffs

Address Service Requested

Please send stories, poems or love gifts by

June 15, 2011

newsletter@tcfomaha.org

The 34th Annual TCF National Conference is coming this July 15-17 in Minneapolis Minnesota. The National Conference is an amazing weekend of workshops and sharing. It really is an incredible experience.

For information on this years TCF National conference visit:
http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/TCF_2011_National_Conference_Minneapolis.asp

Thank you to the following businesses and professionals who have generously assisted us in our mission

New Cassel Retirement Center · One World Community Health Center · Ted E Bear Hollow · Centering Corporation

Love Gifts · Address Change · Authorization To Print Name & Dates

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends, PO Box 540852, Omaha, NE 68154

Your Name _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Date _____ Gift of \$ _____ **DIRECT MY GIFT TOWARD:**

- Angel of Hope Project Memorial Programs
- General Fund (90% local/10% national) Outreach -printing, postage, phone, web

In Memory of _____

Message: _____

I GIVE MY PERMISSION TO PRINT MY CHILD'S NAME, BIRTH & DEATH MONTH/DAY IN THE NEWSLETTER

Child's Name _____

Birth Date _____ Death Date _____ Your Relationship _____

SIGNATURE REQUIRED _____ DATE _____

You will no longer receive the newsletter if 2 years have passed since our last contact with you. You may be added back to the mailing list at your request. 2010

The Sharing of Grief

I cannot carry this burden alone, the road it too
Steep and the pain too great.

I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am
Able to lean on a firm shoulder

Whose strength lies in the reality of the feet
Which bear its weight.

The sharing of grief is the only solution to the
Crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age.
To share a person's sorrow is to accept their
Reality and to acknowledge the fact that none
of us is immune from death.

Rev. Dr. Simon Stephens
Founder of The Compassionate Friends



34th National Conference
Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN
July 15-17, 2011



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

TCF 2011 National Conference - Minneapolis

Give Yourself the Gift of Understanding this Summer by Attending TCF's 34th National Conference! Early Registration Ends June 10!

If you're seeking a way to remember and grieve for your child, sibling, or grandchild with people who understand and don't expect you to be "back to normal," why not give yourself a gift this summer by attending The Compassionate Friends National Conference July 15-17 in Minneapolis, Minnesota! We're anticipating 1200 or more at the conference and for the 12th Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember® in conjunction with the conference Sunday at 8 a.m. starting from the host hotel. It's easy to register online or you can download a registration packet and submit it by mail. Early registration discounts end June 10, 2011, so we recommend registering soon!

If you're not able to attend the conference, there will still be plenty of opportunities to participate in the event whether it will be by ordering a Star of Hope picture centered around a special child you're remembering, by creating a memorial website and raising donations through the Walk to Remember Friends Asking Friends program, or by submitting a name of a child to be carried by volunteers in the Walk to Remember. Stop back here for more on these opportunities!!



Ten Things We Need to Know about Grief

1. Grief hurts – There is real pain.
2. Grief is Normal – The pain, anger, depression, numbness, guilt, mental con-

fusion,

etc. is all NORMAL. You are not going crazy if you experience these.

3. Grief Endures – It takes years for healing to occur.

4. People Grieve Differently – Everyone is an individual and does his/her grief work differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

5. Physical Reactions –

- A. Loss of appetite or overeating;
- B. Insomnia - sleeplessness;
- C. Sleeping all the time - depression?;
- D. Sexual difficulties - not wanting/deserving pleasure;
- E. Loss of energy - takes all you have to get out of bed;
- F. Difficulty concentrating; Physical ailments.

7. Holidays, Anniversaries, Special Days Are Stressful. - Holidays are "family time" and are difficult when a child is absent.

8. Grief Causes One to Examine His/Her Philosophy of life. - We now question many religious principles we have always accepted in the past. Questioning God and His role in the loss is normal and okay. Being angry at God is okay. You can't be angry at someone you don't believe in! God hurts when we hurt.

9. Grief Changes You! - When your child dies, you will never be the person you were before! Don't be frightened by the changes taking place inside of you. You will eventually find your "resting place" as healing takes place.

10. Recovery and Healing is Possible! - You will never "get over" the death of a child, but you won't always hurt like you do initially. All attempts to avoid grief will only postpone it. IT DOES GET BETTER!

--Chuck Prestwood, TCF, Jackson, MS

Our chapter banner for the 2011 National Conference. You have the opportunity to add your loved ones name to the banner that will on display and carried on the remembrance walk at the conference. The banner will be at the monthly meetings until the conference.

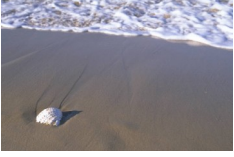
On the wings of

HOPE

Our children, gone too soon.

2011 NEBRASKA REMEMBERS

2011 Nebraska Regional Conference



As the Tide Recedes

It has been two years since our son Nathan died, and I am often amazed at how much our family has changed during that time. I think of our grieving process as being a lot like a stroll along the beach at high tide. In the beginning, when our loss was fresh and new, the waves of pain were unbearably intense, coming at us without pause. They seemed to hit us everywhere at once-- in the face, in the stomach, in our hearts--knocking us down to the ground.

The grief and anger we felt swelled over our heads; we were drowning in emotions we couldn't understand. And we began to wonder if we would ever be able to breathe normally again. "How can life go on when it hurts so much?" we asked.

But time passed, and the tide receded. The water dropped to our knees. The waves seemed to strike with less frequency, and when they did hit, their power was diminished. But we sensed that we were still not free. Sometimes, when we least expected it, a huge wall of grief seemed to rise out of nowhere, pounding us with the memories. We stumbled but did not fall.

One day, we looked up and discovered that we were walking only on wet sand. We had been battered by the waves, but still stood erect. And we recognized that our loss had given us an enduring strength.

Scattered on the shore before us were beautiful treasures that had previously been hidden by the deep water. These treasures, which sparkled like jewels in the sand, were all priceless memories of our child that had submerged in our pain. Now it was possible to gather up our thoughts of the happy times and hold them close to our heart.

Today, we walk through the shallow, lapping waves with a new confidence, leaving our wet footprints in the sand... The past, like the salt of the sea, clings to our skin. We know that the tide will return-- with anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and special family occasions-- but the grief will never be as powerful or as strong. We have learned to live like the flotsam which floats on the surface of the water: ride gently with the waves; let the grief carry you forward so that you will be ready to stand strong and upright when once again feet touch solid ground.

Janet Lyet Gassman, Colorado Springs TCF



Graduation Time

It's June and graduation time again. You child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring "Pomp and Circumstance." Now there will be a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you're strange?

As always, you must follow your heart. So, go if you'd like to, and don't hide your tears. It's quite alright to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others.

Just remember that your own instincts are the most important ones; that no one else can make this decision for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other people think of you.

It was your child who died. This is your pain, and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way - and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

~Peggy Gibson, TCF/Nashville, TN



Pennies from Heaven

Today I found a penny,
Just laying on the ground.
But it's not just a penny,
This little coin I've found.
Found pennies come from heaven.
That's what my Grandpa told me.
He said Angels toss them down.
Oh, how I loved that story.
He said when an Angel misses you,
They toss a penny down,
Sometimes just to cheer you up,
To make a smile out of your frown.
So don't pass by that penny
When you're feeling blue;
It may be a Penny from Heaven
That an Angel's tossed to you.

~Author Unknown



CREATE A MEMORY GARDEN

The physical activity of working and tending to a garden can give comfort and quiet time to remember the special memories that

you once shared. Creating a memory garden will help you feel closer to those you lost and create a tribute to the one you

loved for the rest of his/her friends and family members to heal. To begin a memory garden, find a private place or choose a location that has meaning. Remember to plant from your heart. Choose plants that evoke memory, fond regards and celebration of life.

Things to Consider When Creating Your Garden:

- 1 Start simple. Plant a few things each year.
- 2 Plant their favorite flowers or choose flowers that you loved or has special significance
- 3 and plant those.
- 4 Plant during their favorite season and choose flowers, plants or trees that are in
- 5 season at that time. For example, if they loved spring, plant bulbs.
- 6 Plant the flower of their birth month, namesake plants, or plants that represent their initials. Select flowers in colors that he/she loved.
- 7 Choose flowers with their favorite fragrances or certain scents they loved. For example, if they loved the smell of lavender, include a lavender plant in the garden.
- 8 Select flowers and plants with special meanings. For example, pink carnations mean .I.ll never forget you. and yellow roses represent friendship. Roses have names that might describe your loved one.
- 9 Include statues and remembrance gifts throughout the garden. If they loved dogs, include a small statue of their favorite breed.
- 10 Add a small plaque describing what is in the garden and its significance, or simply put their favorite phrase or poem.
- 11 If possible, try and include a bench in the area. This way, friends and family have a place to sit and reflect on special times that were shared.
- 12 Your memory garden project can involve the whole family. Not only could the best “memory flowers” be chosen, but once in bloom, flowers could be pressed as mementos for the family album or scrapbook.



INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Fourth of July, Independence Day, Our Nation’s Birthday. Whatever you call it, we celebrate America’s independence from

England on July 4th each year. As a nation, we have endured for 200+ years to become a significant, independent, and powerful

force in the world. We were founded on the principles of equality and religious tolerance, of equity and opportunity, and of rights and responsibilities. Several generations of men and women have defended our precious freedom with their lives. As we celebrate this year, let’s take a moment to remember those who paid the ultimate price for freedom— and to remember their families. It is sometimes easy to think only of the glory of their sacrifices, and to overlook the sacrifice of their families. War is never glorious, no matter how romantic the notion created by Hollywood. War has casualties that go farther and deeper into the fabric of our nation than we may realize. Those who died are buried with fanfare, as befits a nation’s fallen valiant’s. Their families learn to go on, just as we have, in spite of their loss. But think for a moment of those who were declared missing in action, or who were prisoners of war. Their families must endure, often for years, and sometimes without an end to their pain and loss. Remember all of our nation’s fallen when you celebrate this year. Remember those ceremoniously laid to rest; remember those who were captured, imprisoned, even tortured; remember those whose fate remains unknown. And remember, too, the families of all of them. Death, no matter how noble, is never easy for those left behind. We send our thanks to the veterans— living, dead, and missing— and their families.

- Tom and Sondra Wright

TCF Tucker, GA



VACATIONS

By: Betty Ewart
Bereaved Mother
Lewisburg, WV

There is not a lot written about vacation time even though this can be a very difficult time. I remember so well the first July vacation we took after Ruthie's death in April. I could not face going and "leaving her" and going to all the places we had been in the past

with her. That is one of the "firsts." Here are some hints that may help if you are dreading vacation time. By the way, there is never a time that you don't think of vacations past but the memories get less painful and you begin to forge new memories.

Where do we go?

There is no good answer to that. Yes, if you go where you have always gone on vacations, memories will flood in. But if you choose a totally new place, we found that you just wonder how he/she would have liked it here, what would she have done, etc. So, you take your choice and expect the feelings and plan for them.

What do we do if we visit relatives?

Talk to them. Tell them that it is hard and that it is alright to talk about your child – when they see that you welcome hearing the name and having them share memories they have, everyone can relax.

Will I forget her/him?

Don't fear! You can never forget just because you are away from home memories. Don't be afraid to talk about her/him and let them be a part of things.

Traveling companion?

Remember that you can not really leave your grief at home when you go on vacation. It will go with you. Plan for it and pack for it. Don't over-schedule the days and activities. You won't feel like doing as much, perhaps, as usual, and you may tire more easily. Take along some reading material – perhaps on grief but some light reading too. Just remember that bereaved families and people need a respite from the daily stresses of work and of life and grief. Also know that often the anticipation is worse than the actual event. If you have been through Christmas, a birthday or a death anniversary, etc., you may remember that the weeks or days before may be worrisome and you may not be sure how you will get through it, but suddenly the day is there and over and it wasn't as bad as you expected, even if it was bad.

So just decide when and where the vacation will be, plan ahead, and go. Allow yourself to enjoy it. Often we feel guilty if we have a good time. Remember how much your child enjoyed trips and life and know that she or he would want you to do the same.

Taken from A JOURNEY TOGETHER, www.bereavedparentsusa.org

FOR DADS

What I can't understand is how we men will run to someone else to get a small splinter out of our finger but will refuse to ask directions when we are driving and will drive and swear for hours before asking for assistance.

The biggest splinter I ever had was when my daughter died. I needed help. Ministers, funeral directors, friends, fellow workers, doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists couldn't help. They didn't know what I was going through. One friend, whose son had been murdered said, "Go to a Compassionate Friends meeting.. He knew! I went to a TCF meeting. No one took the splinter out. No one offered any .how to.s.. No one told me .You should... No one could, or tried to take away all the pain. But they had been there. They knew, and because they knew, and I knew that they knew, it helped.

What I had gone through and will go through in my grief, someone had been there before me. This knowledge has assisted me in my travel through pain. I still have that big hole in my gut. My eyes still fill with tears at odd times. But I know that I'm not crazy. I know that I am not alone. I know that others have gone through these same things and for some dumb reason, this helps.

- Tom Crouthamel, TCF, Sarasota, FL

I'll always be your Dad

Years have come and gone and time has surely drifted by
I've searched for any answer yet I'm left to wonder why
The only thing I know for sure through the happy and the sad
No matter what the circumstance I will always be your dad.

Not a day goes by that I don't hold you in my heart.
My love reaches far beyond this space we are apart
These empty arms remember all the good times that we had
I may be standing here alone but I will always be your dad

Some won't understand so I don't bother to explain
They look in to my eyes but they can only see the pain
Afraid to look too deep as they are blinded by the fear
If only they could know a father's love won't disappear.

So when this road gets lonely and the journey seems too hard
And I get to feeling sorry that I didn't get a card
If I close my eyes I can almost hear you say
I love you and I miss you daddy... Happy fathers day
Blessings,

By Alan Pedersen



Tools for Grieving

SPEAK YOUR GRIEF Talking is like a sponge and slowly squeeze it out. Talking is painful. Not talking is more painful.

JOURNAL YOUR THOUGHTS Talk on paper. Hold nothing back.

CRY When we cry because of a broken heart the chemistry of these tears is different from other tears. Tears unshed cause other organs to weep.

MEDITATE Give yourself space for total quiet time. Quiet meditation brings your blood pressure down, slows your breathing, and relieves feelings of panic. The quiet also brings down levels of cholesterol, blood glucose, and adrenaline.

PRAY... and ask someone to pray for you. This is a medically proven benefit.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE relieves built up energy. High intensity exercise, such as jogging and weight lifting, relieves severe feelings of depression and fatigue. Low intensity exercise, such as going for a walk, relieves "antsy" or "I just can't sit still" feelings.

ACCEPT LOVE and SUPPORT from people you trust. Easier said than done. We tend to build a wall and hang out a sign that says, "Just leave me alone. I'm all right."

NATURE is nurturing. Sit on a rock. Study the design of a weed, tree, or flower. Feel the breeze on your cheek, the sun that warms you, and the cool of the shade.

A GRIEF PARTNER is a good thing. This is someone you seek out and trust. Someone who can understand and accept you in your pit ... right where you are.

CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE can be a valuable resource. It may be a place where you can find answers to some of your questions.

JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP where you can take off your mask and truly be yourself. Those who have walked the path of grief are willing to share their wisdom and give you a special kind of courage.

REST even if you cannot sleep. Watch your caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol intake. These chemicals can cause anxiety and make it impossible to sleep .

EXPRESS ANGER in ways that are not harmful to yourself or another person. Chop wood, run hard, pound nails, throw old dishes against the back of the garage wall, go into a canyon and scream .

GUILT is a normal feeling. Deep down we believe we should have been able to protect our child ... if I had only ... done this ... or not done that. Speak your feelings of guilt to another person, someone who is willing to hear your feelings. Remember ... feelings are not always facts.

HUMAN TOUCH is a very basic form of comfort. We live in a "high tech-low-touch" culture. Now you need a hug. It would even feel good to be rocked! When someone asks you if there is anything they can do for you, say, "Yes, I could use a gift certificate for a professional massage."

NURTURE YOURSELF Sit in the warm sun when you feel cold. Wrap up in a soft warm blanket. Take a warm bath.

LISTEN to SOOTHING MUSIC which soothes your soul.

NUTRITION is essential for healing a broken heart. Avoid sugar, drink plenty of water, avoid spicy and greasy foods, make meals small and frequent. Take supplemental vitamins and minerals.

DEVELOP A HOBBY If you already have a hobby, establish another one. Think of something you have always wanted to do, and begin to do.

LEARN RELAXATION TECHNIQUES and take a few minutes every day to practice them. You will find some muscles are painfully tight and tense. We carry a lot of pressure in our necks and shoulders.

--by Alice Monroe, R.N., from 2003 TCF workshop, Atlanta, GA