



# The Compassionate Friends

## Supporting Family After a Child Dies



THIS MONTH:

OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE

**This Month:** *Holiday Panel—How to Handle the Holidays*

Newsletter Editor: Crys Kelly

## THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING!

The Holidays are coming! The Holidays are coming!" Most bereaved parents make that observation with the same sense of fear and dread that Chicken Little had when he announced, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" We view Christmas or Hanukkah differently than the rest of the world. In our minds they become great trials to be endured. In my opinion, this trial is tougher than birthdays or death anniversaries. This is the time when love abounds. The family (and extended family) all gather together, coming from near and far, to share in this love. The only trouble with this happy scene is that our child is missing. He or she has traveled too far from us to come for the holidays! We can't buy gifts for a photograph or hug and kiss a memory. The emptiness that this creates in us cannot be filled, no matter how many relatives gather by our hearth. To add to the pain, most well-meaning friends and relatives feel that the best way to handle the problem is to pretend that it doesn't exist. They never mention the one person that is on the minds and in the hearts of everyone. We found out early on that

it is not possible to keep the "presence" of our child out of a family gathering. Trying to do so makes everyone uncomfortable and causes us as parents to feel disloyal.

The first Christmas after our son died, we did it "their" way. Never again! Now we make sure that he is very much a part of our



holiday. For starters, we decided once again to hang all three stockings. We don't fill them, but just seeing them all hanging together is right for us. The tree was very important to Blake. Every year he took the responsibility of stringing the lights for us. Now it is important to us to see that Blake has a tree. We have a very special one, about 3 feet tall, that we weight heavily at the bottom. We decorate it with weather-proof ornaments and place it at his grave. We

leave the tree there until spring so it can make the gravesite when the snows are deep. We also have a lovely candle that we burn on special days. This is our way of including our missing son in the family circle. But most important, we talk about him. We don't do it obsessively, but we don't hesitate to recall memories of him as often as we recall those of other children in the family. Because we talk of him in an easy and natural manner, the rest of the family has taken our cue. They now bring up his name naturally. It is all so much more comfortable than the way we tried to handle it that first year.

Another couple in our chapter had a wonderful idea for the first holiday after their daughter died. Their greatest fear was that no one would mention her, so they compiled an album of her pictures and casually left it out on the coffee table. It wasn't long before people were looking through it, recalling favorite memories of her, and the ice was broken.

There must be so many other ways that you can

## Steering Committee

### CHAPTER LEADERS

Crys Kelly (817) 875-7490  
Jaye Sanford (817) 475-9363  
**Contact via Chapter Email**  
tcffortworth@gmail.com

### Treasurer

Steve Roberts (682) 583-0125  
sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

### Hospitality

Marty Akeman (817) 636-5645  
Christine Anderson  
(817) 300-6196

Lydia Moore (817) 829-3801

### Newsletter

Crys Kelly (817) 875-7490  
tcffortworth@gmail.com

### Librarian

Liz Hutchison (817) 726-3999

### Welcome Bags

Janet DuPertuis

### Committee Members

Jeff Abodeely

Jeff & Marty Martin

Jerry & Sharon Austry

Charles & Genie Dean

## Meeting Refreshments

Please sign up on our website if you would like to bring refreshments for one of our monthly meetings. We have four openings each month. Thank YOU!



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## Need to Talk?

Listed below are parents, grandparents and siblings who have walked where you are today.

If you are having a difficult day and just want to talk, please call.

### Addiction

Helen (817) 431-6964

### Auto

Jeff & Marty (817) 475-9141

### Grandchild/

### Multiple Loss

Lydia (817) 829-3801

### Drowning

Debi (817) 270-3275

### Drowning (Young Child)

Stacy (817) 656-7540

or (817) 845-3433

### Long Term Illness

Marty (817) 636-5645

### Homicide (Only Child)

Steve (682) 583-0125

sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

### Suicide (Only Child)

Joy (817) 453-2227

### Suicide

Glinda (817) 485-3772

### Siblings

Cheryl (817) 624-7043

lopezgregg@aol.com

### Premature Infant(s)

Amy (817) 944-1710

amytori12@hotmail.com



## Middle of the night calls

Liz (817) 726-3999

(Continued from Page 1)

make your child a part of your holiday—ways that seem right and comfortable for you. You may choose to keep your thoughts private rather than share them with others. But the most important thing to remember is that the choice is yours. Do what makes you comfortable, not what others think should make you comfortable. If you follow the dictates of your heart and that gives you comfort, those around you will see that it is so and follow your lead.

Marge Frankenberg  
TCF Arlington Heights, IL

## HALLOWEEN MEMORIES

Most children enjoy Halloween, the costumes, the candy, the parties, trick or treat, the decorations and so much more. My son looked forward to Halloween with great anticipation. Until he reached the fourth grade, Todd was happy to pick out a costume at the discount store....usually the current movie or television monster.

He came home from school in fourth grade and told me that there was going to be a costume contest and he really wanted to have a unique costume. I asked him what he wanted to be, and I will never forget his response: "I want to be a vampire, Mom. A really cool vampire." So, I talked to a friend of mine who was into stage production, and we went to her house the night before the contest.

She had a vampire cape, a vampire body suit, a vampire collar and great makeup. Todd loved it. My friend stopped at the house early the next morning and applied the makeup and did the finishing touches on Todd's costume. He looked just like the vampires in the movies, He was so pleased. He really wanted to win first place in his class. I dropped him at school and told him to have a wonderful

time. He was elated. As the day progressed, I wondered how he was doing. He had never wanted to win a prize before; what if he didn't get first place in his class? I worried about him, knowing that his feelings were easily hurt by cruel children and sometimes by cruel teachers. He called me at 3:30 to let me know he was home. I could hear excitement in his voice, and I asked him how he did.

"Mom, you won't believe this", he said in a serious, low toned voice. "What happened?", I asked, now wondering about the day's events. "I won first place, Mom. First place in the whole school. I can't wait for Halloween. Wait till Grandpa sees me. He won't even recognize me. I even got a certificate for first place....I'm putting it up in my room." I was so happy that tears welled in my eyes. My son had tried his best, and he had won. He had put himself out there and he wasn't disappointed, disillusioned or discouraged.

That was the first of many accomplishments in my son's life. He went on to win in track in high school, restore a 1965 GTO from the ground up and receive numerous trophies and awards. He attained his BS and MBA and was successful and respected in business. He was a great father to his children, and his love for them was very deep. He never hesitated to tell them he loved them and how proud he was of them. He was a wonderful parent. He was always an amazing son. His death left a scar on my soul and a hole in my heart.

But his first success is forever in my mind. The little certificate which he brought home and hung on his bedroom wall is a treasure of his wonderful childhood. Halloween is still a happy holiday, and it is one of the few which I enjoy. I thank my son for that and for all the joy he gave me in his short 35 years of life.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF, Katy, TX

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**Email:** nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org **Website:** www.compassionatefriends.org The website contains links to TCF's national and regional conferences, brochures, e-newsletter, online support community, *We Need Not Walk Alone* magazine, "Healing the Grieving Heart" and "The Open to Hope Show" radio program archives, webinars, chapter websites, and other resources. **Regional Coordinator:** Bill Campbell 972-935-0673 jobill@sbcglobal.net

**Facebook:** The Compassionate Friends/USA **In Spanish:** Los Amigos Compasivos/USA **Twitter:** Text follow TCFofUSA to 40404

## 10 TIPS FOR LIVING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

1. Remind yourself that you will survive. You will.
2. Think about what will bring you the most peace this holiday season.
  - i. Keeping all traditions intact?
  - ii. Tweaking some traditions a bit and adding new ones?
  - iii. Throwing out all the old traditions and starting new ones?
  - iv. Flying to the Caribbean and completely skipping the holidays this year? It's okay to do that.
3. Don't expect anyone to mention your child by name. *Believe it or not*, that's your job. People will look to you to determine whether or not it's safe to talk about the person that died. A few subtle ways to do that:
  - i. Serve/bring your child's favorite dish to the holiday get-together – talk about it!
  - ii. Bring a favorite picture – pass it around. Work it into the dining table centerpiece.
  - iii. Bring a favorite memento – a book, a poem, a toy, a video, an article of clothing - share it after dinner.
  - iv. Have your child's favorite music playing in the background – tell the story!
4. Plan a special evening for close family and friends when you REMEMBER. Ask everyone to bring a favorite photo and write down a special memory. Set time aside to sit in a circle and share the photos and memories.
5. Remember that it's okay – it's even healthy – to cry.
6. It's okay to stay in bed...you will get

out, when you are ready and able.

7. It's also okay to smile or even laugh, a bit. You're not being disloyal.
8. Buy yourself a gift. Wrap it. Write a note – to you – from your beloved child.
9. Buy someone less fortunate than you a gift.
10. Light a candle.

Granted by the author  
Tom Zuba

## WANT A BUTTON?

If you would like to have one, simply bring a photo to any of our monthly chapter meetings and we can make one for you. There is no cost.



## COMPANION SOJOURNERS

The dictionary defines the word “sojourn” as temporary place where one may stop, rest, visit, dwell, abide and lodge. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of fellow sojourners. At our monthly meetings we stop for a while to find respite from a world that does not understand what it means to lose a child. We find a safe dwelling where there are others who are just like us. We don't need to have any special skills to be a sojourner. As bereaved parents we instinctively reach out to one another. Those of us who have been on our journey for a while are drawn to comfort the others who have more recently embarked on their path of grief. We don't need to say any special words. A discerning look, a listening ear, or a gentle touch can be balm the other person needs to give them a moment's solace. We are companion sojourners, wounded healers and compassionate friends.

## LOVE GIFTS



*Love Gifts* are a thoughtful way to remember our precious children and can be made **ONLINE** on our website or by sending your donation to: Steve Roberts  
P.O. Box 734  
Euless, 76039

Is not

your

Grief

the

Affirmation

of your

Love?



## HOLIDAY MEMORIAL



This year's Holiday Memorial service will be in conjunction with the Worldwide Candle lighting service on December 13, 2015.

Visit our website for  
more Online Grief  
Resources





**The  
Compassionate  
Friends**  
*Fort Worth Chapter*  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

2301 N. Sylvania Ave.

Fort Worth, TX 76111

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

WWW.THECOMPASSIONATEFRIENDSFW.COM



**October 2015**

## **Fort Worth Chapter Meeting**

**We meet the 2nd Tuesday  
of every month.**

**Meeting Time: 7 P.M.—9 P.M.**

### **This Month's Program**

*Holiday Panel*

*How to Handle the Holidays*

*Refreshments*

Please sign up on our website and you are always welcome to bring something to share.

*~ Paper Goods and Drinks are provided ~*

ARBORLAWN UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH - ROOM 271  
5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth

## ***A Special Message***

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support materials and loving telephone listeners. Please do not be afraid to come to a gathering.

Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first gathering, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced

the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special feeling at meetings of **The Compassionate Friends**.