



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



THIS MONTH:

APRIL 2015 ISSUE

This Month: *Grief Expression Through Mandalas*

Newsletter Editor: Crys Kelly

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.

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



Steering Committee

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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!



LAST MOMENTS

Last moments
Snatches of conversation
That echo across all decades...
Priceless words
Indelibly etched on the heart.
Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken
But unexpected sentiment—
A quick embrace, a silly smirk,
Or joyous laughter—

Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.
We came too soon to understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which
Taken-for-granted event
Will become
A last moment.

Diane Fields
TCF Westmoreland, PA

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 (817) 914-8689

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



The world may never notice if
a rosebud doesn't bloom
Or even pause to wonder if the
petals fall too soon.
But every life that ever forms
or ever comes to be,
Touches the world in some small
way for all eternity.
The little one we longed for was
swiftly here *and* gone,
But the love that was then planted
Is a light that still *shines* on.
And though our arms *are* empty
our hearts know what to do,
Every beating of our heart says
We will remember you!

FIREMEN'S 5K

The 17th annual Firemen's 5K and One Mile Fun Run will be held at 8 A.M. on Saturday, May 23rd at Arborlawn United



Methodist Church, 5001 Briarhaven, Fort Worth.

All proceeds benefit the Fort Worth Chapter of The Com-

passionate Friends, The WARM Place, and The Fire-

men's 5K Scholarship Fund.

CLEANING HER ROOM

The other day we cleaned out our daughter's room. Time had remained the same in this room for two and a half years. All that we needed was for our 8-year-old Stephanie to come home!



Come home to a room filled with games, books, toys—all the memories that today remind us of how special her life was. We caressed lovingly the sailor cap she wore at her last dance recital.

Her first "wooby"—now scraps of cloth—but so soft and familiar, Stef refused to give it up until one day we hid it, told her it was lost, and re-



placed it with a new one. How soft it now felt in our hands. Her "Skip-It," purchased only a few days before she died. How excited she was! "Thank you mommy, thank you, thank you! I love you! I love

you!" How long her mom had searched to find one for her. How short the time she was able to use it.

Her Rainbow Brite sleeping bag—given to her one Christmas Eve. She slept for weeks on the floor in that sleeping bag. How much it meant to her. Her baton. Her Burger King watch. Her "Sweet Pea." Her stuffed animals . . . They all screamed "I was Stef's!" Clothes were fold-ed . . . Tears flowed . . .

A new baby is coming to live in Stef's room. We know Stef would approve. If ever a guardian angel exists, we know it is Stef. She will watch over her little sister.

Her love remains to fill this room. It will never be empty!

Wayne Loder

TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI

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Fax: (630) 990-0246 Call toll-free: (877) 969-0010 9 A.M. - 5 P.M., CST, Monday-Friday.

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

BEYOND SURVIVING: "TWENTY FIVE COMMANDMENTS"

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why," or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy - you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will have to act on these thoughts.
8. Remember to take one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.

GRIEF EXPRESSION THROUGH MANDALAS

Creating a circular design called a mandala is a meditative practice, a healing exercise in times of crisis, and a pleasurable act of creativity. As a symbol of the Self, the mandala provides a unique connection to our innermost being. Come join us as we explore the healing power found in the expression of our grief through Mandalas.



18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends, or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at your-self is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

Iris Bolton
Author of My Son, My Son

WANT A BUTTON?

Photo buttons are a perfect way to share your child, grandchild or sibling with others at monthly meetings. 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. Keep in mind that the button is about 2 1/4 inches in diameter, so the picture needs to fit inside that area and the actual photo is used, so make sure it's one we can cut into a small circle.



LOVE GIFTS



In Memory of

Leigh Taylor

By Valerie Mitchell, Leigh's
Mother

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 202654
Arlington, 76006

In times of
darkness...

Love Sees



In times of silence...

Love Hears

In times of doubt...

Love hopes

In times of
sorrow...

Love heals

And in all times...

*Love
Remembers*



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



April 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

Grief Expression through Mandalas

Refreshments

Please feel free to bring refreshments 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**.