



Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, November 21, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

Contact

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TCF National Organization
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.
Meeting will begin with refreshments followed by announcement of birthdays and anniversaries and reading of the Credo. We will then have open discussion.
8:00 p.m.
Meeting will close by recognizing our childrens' names. Feel free to visit after the meeting or check out books from our library.

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The Second Time Around

For all bereaved parents our lives are marked by events that are characterized as "before" and "after." In the past decade there have been three events that have changed my life forever. The first occurred on May 4, 1997, when my son Richard Jr. died suddenly by suicide at the age of twenty four. He was about to enter basic training in the US Navy on the next day. Life as we knew it has come to an end. After the initial shock and denial begin to subside we begin our very long and lonely grief journey.

My wife needs to find answers, is filled with guilt and anger and needs to explore the whys and what if's. I begin to read everything I can find that deals with death of a child, suicide and grief. I try to move quickly through the steps so that I can "get on with my life." We grieve very differently but at the time I have no idea that this is normal. I try to get my wife to move along with me but it doesn't work. We eventually settle in back to our jobs and the subject of our son's death often ends in conflict. As time marches on, my grief is neatly buried in a package that sits in a place that nobody can find. My son is certainly not discussed at work but I am functioning and feel I am doing okay.

The second event occurs about two years later. I am on a bus touring the west and I meet a couple named Ceil and John. We are placed together for dinner and as pleasantries are being exchanged, the dreaded question surfaces. How many children do you have? Ceil will later tell me that the minute I hesitated that she knew I was a bereaved parent. The rest of the week is spent talking of my son's life, his death and my journey for the last two years. I have found people who really are interested in what I have to say. They don't change the subject and they don't run away. For the first time since my son died I can talk freely outside of my home. She tells me about TCF and, with a promise to find a local chapter when I return to Boston we say our goodbyes. She also tells me of a National Conference being held in Virginia the following year.

Ceil is a persistent person and, when I return home I find the local chapter. To my shock I find that the meetings are held in the same parish from where my son was buried. I attend the first meeting and feel that I have found a new home that is safe and loving. I can now tell my story to people who will listen and not judge.

The next year I attend my first TCF National Conference. One of the first people I meet is a woman who had four children die. I am overwhelmed by the numbers, the love and sharing that takes place during those three days. I attend a workshop given by Rich Edler on "Finding Joy Again" He talks of gifts that we receive from our children who have died, and about a new life with new meaning. He even suggests that you might become a better person because of what you have been through. I haven't experienced any of these gifts but I am uplifted and hopeful. When it is time to leave I am frightened to reenter the real world. It is painful to take off the badge that I have worn for the last three days.

It does not take long for me to find one of those gifts. Shortly after returning home I learn that the brother of a colleague has died. I know that I must go and talk to her mother because I have been there and I can. I am frightened but somehow the words just come to me. We talk of her pain and about TCF and she soon is a regular at our meetings. For the first time I see something positive has resulted from my son's death. My life once again has new meaning. I become more committed to and involved in TCF. I am learning that "Helping is Healing" and the more I give the more I seem to get back. More gifts arrive as I become able to speak and write about my journey.

It is November 21, 2004, and today I will experience the third event that will further define my life. We are sitting with four other members of TCF from different parts of the country at lunch discussing the upcoming 2005 National Conference at the Copley Marriott. My wife is with me

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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.



We need not walk alone.

"I am learning that 'Helping is Healing' and the more I give the more I seem to get back. More gifts arrive as I become able to speak and write about my journey."
—Rick Mirabile

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting last month.

We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not-for-profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the third Tuesday of the month). The meeting is open to everyone and free of charge. You are free to talk, cry or to sit in silence; we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families (100% of funds are used for this outreach). Donations, along with the name of the person being honored, may be sent to:

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any "oldies" to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, "Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer."

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and one other member of our chapter and, of course, my friend Ceil. Of the six of us, two have suffered multiple losses. On the way home we discuss how remarkable it is that people can go on and do remarkable things with their lives after suffering such loss. At that moment we did not realize that we were also already members of that group. We ride by the mortuary in Boston and comment on how horrible the journey to identify my son had been almost eight years earlier. We did not realize that my daughter Lynn's body had already been taken there. We arrive home to the news that our daughter Lynn had died earlier that day. The journey had begun once again. Our TCF friends arrive and my friend Ceil stays with us until after the funeral, giving up Thanksgiving with her family. We are surrounded by love and support and I again realize what it means to be "A Compassionate Friend."

Little has been written about those who have suffered multiple losses. The impact has been devastating. Our family has shrunk by forty percent. My surviving child Libby is 24 years old and has gone from the youngest to the only surviving child. There are now two empty rooms in our home. But some things are different. From the moment I heard of Lynn's death I knew that being newly bereaved was the last place I ever thought I would be. I also knew that, as bad as I felt, it would not be like that forever. I had traveled this road before. I knew that I was not alone, had acquired new tools and had a very large family of TCFers that I could lean on. I knew that my wife and I would grieve very differently as we had before, but that it was okay and we would respect each other's way of dealing with grief. And I also knew that I must carry on with my involvement with TCF in order to survive. I now had two children whose memories must be kept alive. Rich Edler had taught me that I could help because I had been there. Because my family was that much smaller we each had to do more to make Richard and Lynn proud of us. For the next six months I was kept busy with plans for the 2005 National Conference. It was a labor of love done in memory of my children. My wife and daughter also helped and we all learned that "Helping is Healing." I also realized that becoming involved with the conference was a way to postpone some of the pain and emptiness that I knew would resurface.

It is 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 3rd. The 28th National Conference has ended and most of those who have attended have left the hotel. I look around to see if there are any more goodbyes to say, anymore of those TCF hugs to receive before I leave the world of understanding, comfort and love. I have inhabited this place for the past three days and am reluctant to reenter that "other world" where we are invisible in our grief to most whom we meet. How difficult it is to take off the badges that we all wear so proudly giving our children faces as well as names. They are the tools we use to tell others our stories. I have had the chance to visit and share with many friends. I have been educated, entertained and wrapped in support. I have also had the privilege to serve on the conference committee and share my experience in a workshop. This work has helped to give purpose to my life and the lives of my children. Many members of our chapter have experienced a TCF conference for the first time and we share. We have been brought closer by working together and walking in memory of our children. As I think of the last six months, I realize that this conference will stand as a very important part of my grief journey.

I have left that cocoon and once again am brought back to the realization that my grief is still very raw and I have far to go. But I also see that I walk with so many ready to help. I know that we may distract ourselves with work or other activities, take our grief in measured doses, and postpone our journey to regain some strength, but it is a journey that will still lie ahead. Darcy Sims talked about grief that, after over twenty-five years is still just "under the surface" ready to make its appearance at any time. As time goes on we become better able to manage the grief and place it in that spot when we need to.

November will be a difficult month for my family as we remember my son Richard's 33rd birthday on November 16th and the one year anniversary of my daughter Lynn's death on November 21st. Some years it is harder to give thanks than others. I have received many gifts this year. The best ones came with a badge, a child's picture and a TCF hug.

Rick Mirabile is a chapter leader and newsletter editor for the South Shore MA TCF chapter in Hingham, MA. He lives with his wife Ellen. His surviving child Libby lives in Greenwich, CT.





We need not walk alone.

"Memory is a way of holding onto the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose." —*The Wonder Years*

Love Gifts



Juanita Blake in memory of Sue Ratheal

Phyllis Cavazos in memory of Chad Cavazos

Misty Morales in memory of Donna Morales

Patricia Miller in memory of Shanna Marie Redmond - refreshments for the meeting

Jack & Julie LePelley in memory of Trey LePelley

Margie Newman in memory of Jeremy Newman

Sharon Peymon in memory of Michael Peymon - refreshments for the meeting

Mary & Erin Lingle in memory of Candice Lingle

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell - use of a storage building

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler to use their facilities as our meeting place



Newsletter Submissions

TCF Tyler welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to:

TCF Tyler • 5401 Hollytree Drive, 1204 • Tyler, Texas 75703
Or e-mail text and photos to: info@TylerTCF.org

We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. Deadline for submissions is the 3rd Tuesday of each month. TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source. Errors and Omissions: Please notify us if any of your information is incorrect.

TCF Library Hours

Mon, Tue, Thur: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

Wed: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Fri: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The Library is located in our meeting location, the College-Bound Solutions offices, at 707 W. Houston Street, Tyler.



Announcements

Our Annual Candlelighting Ceremony will be held on Dec. 10th, 6:30 p.m. at Carpenter's Cross Baptist Church, Hwy. 344 and 155 S. Please contact Tina Loper at (903) 594-2132 or Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 for more information. The media is invited to attend. Please let us know if you would like to help this year in honor and in loving memory of your child.



If you would like a phone friend, please call Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 or Mary Lingle at (903) 581-4566.

We are accepting canned food at the meetings through November for the Lack's Christmas tree food drive.

Plan to attend a special February 20, 2007 meeting. We will have a speaker, live music by Alan Pedersen, refreshments and volunteer recognition. Please bring a friend. Alan's music and story are at www.everashleymusic.com.

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

If you would like to have your child's photo included on the third memorial quilt, please mail a \$25 donation to P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711. For more information contact us at (903) 258-2547, or email us at info@TylerTCF.org.

Thanks to Teresa and David Terrell for donating their talent and time on these beautiful quilts which will be displayed in our meeting room and at future special events.



Please share your stories,
poems or love messages for
inclusion in our newsletter.





We need not walk alone.

"As long as I can I will look at this world for both of us. As long as I can I will laugh with the birds, I will sing with the flowers, I will pray to the stars, for both of us." —Sascha

November Birthdays



Wade Goetze
11-29-76 ~ 10-28-01
Son of Charlotte Nelson



Rusty Welch
11-29-57 ~ 1-1-67
Son of Travis & Martha Welch



Christopher Jordan Pope
11-10-90 ~ 6-16-03
Son of Edward & Brenda Pope



Lindsey Stewart
11-6-87 ~ 4-2-04
Daughter of Stephanie Stewart



Kayla Smith
11-7-89 ~ 3-5-04
Daughter of Debbie Smith



Bobby Knott
11-6-68 ~ 4-24-83
Son of Bobby & Virginia Knott



Jill Tompkins
Daughter of Karen Tompkins
11-3-77 ~ 4-24-99



Mikel Conway
11-17-57 ~ 10-11-01
Son of Viola Conway
Brother of Margie Newman



Austin Lane Phillips
11-8-96 ~ 11-8-96
Son of Stacie Phillips Monteagudo



Shane Crim
11-25-91 ~ 11-9-05
Son of Dolly Mobley

Thanksgiving Memory Is A Treasure

The last time I saw my son was on November 30, 2002. It was a warm, clear Saturday and he and his family had gathered with us at a friend's home for a relaxing Saturday afternoon.

Todd had arrived in Houston on Wednesday, stopped at my office to finish some work and later came home. His daughters and wife were in a different car and had gone to spend the weekend at her parent's house.

Thanksgiving dinner was at our home that year. After dinner, Todd and his family went to the in-laws for dessert. When he and his son came back home about nine, Todd and I set and talked for hours. We talked about the many problems he was facing, the many problems I was facing. We discussed options, solutions, children, his plan for the next two years and much more. We reminisced about past holidays, the history of our family and what contributed to a good childhood. He wanted the same childhood experience for his children that he had; this touched my heart. Most mothers tell their children "someday you'll thank me," but I was able to hear it from my son's heart.

Friday morning found Todd and John changing the oil in the Durango. Todd planned for his son, Clay, to stay and learn to do this chore, but he was overruled by his wife. I could see the pain on Todd's face when she insisted that Clay spend that time with her parents. He wanted a teaching moment with his child; he wanted to spend time building memories that they both would share. Later my husband and Todd went to the annual car show in Houston which was their Friday after Thanksgiving tradition. When they came home, Todd and I spent hours talking. It was wonderful to talk to my grown child as a peer. His ideas were excellent, his temperament always patient. The conversation was easy, no roles, no hidden agendas, no secrets.

On Saturday Todd packed his suitcase and laptop and drove to his in-laws for a brief visit. Saturday afternoon he and his family joined us for a meal at a friend's house. They would leave from there and head back to Austin.

After a pleasant four hours of food and conversation, Todd and his children were loading up for the trip back to Austin. He stood in the driveway, gave me a big hug and said, "I love you, mom. Thanks for a great weekend." I can still see him standing there, herding his little tribe into the two vehicles, watching and smiling as his children exchanged kisses and hugs with everyone.

That's how I want to remember my son—the good times, the joys and setbacks shared, the great conversations, the deep exchanges punctuated by a marvelous sense of humor.

Less than three weeks later Todd was killed when he was riding as a passenger in John's Durango. I will always remember our last private conversations, the last time he walked through our front door, the last time I saw his handsome face and the last time he told me he loved me. These and so much more are my Thanksgiving memories—memories that are etched forever in my heart.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen, November, 2005*



We need not walk alone.

“Grief is itself a medicine.” —William Cowper

November Anniversaries



Thomas 'Chuck' Carroll
6-2-73 ~ 11-13-93
Son of Linda & Thomas Carroll



Salvador Estrada
12-11-79 ~ 11-3-01
Son of Charlotte Estrada



Austin Lane Phillips
11-8-96 ~ 11-8-96
Son of Stacie Phillips Montegudo



Shane Crim
11-25-91 ~ 11-9-05
Son of Dolly Mobley



Scottie Baker
8-3-86 ~ 11-29-04
Son of Steve Baker



Jonathan Reynolds
12-14-98 ~ 11-16-02
Son of Addison & Debra Reynolds



Haylee Lee ~ 11-23-02



Candice Lingle
2-21-91 ~ 11-8-93
Daughter of Mary Lingle



Ijuan Simms
2-20-79 ~ 11-7-01
Son of Sharon Simms



Crystal Greene
8-6-82 ~ 11-13-00
Daughter of Lory Greene
Niece of Audrey & Claude Mapps



Timothy Treadwell
4-1-80 ~ 11-23-04
Son of Tammy Treadwell



Brooke Wallace
1-16-81 ~ 11-24-98
Daughter of
Charles & Tammy Wallace



Andy Terrell
2-11-72 ~ 11-25-03
Son of
David & Teresa Terrell

Thankful vs. Thankless

This is the time of year when many bereaved parents start saying out loud what newly bereaved parents have been thinking for weeks and weeks—"I really am dreading the holidays." And why not? When your grief is so new, you haven't had the necessary time to accept life as it is for you now.

On the other hand, there are those of us who have had that necessary time and the proper support who are able to observe the holidays in a less painful way. We have kept some of the old traditions that warm our hearts and thrown out those that are either too painful or meaningless now. We have created a life that doesn't include someone who was a vital part of who and what we were. We're different now, doing different things because losing a child forces you into that position if you are to survive in an emotionally healthy way.

The words thankful and thankless follow one another in my dictionary; so close together in a book, yet so far apart in meaning. When you think about it, the difference between the two words is full and less. Though those of us who have had more time do, like the more newly bereaved, have less in the way of family, our lives still do have a fullness because we have learned to be thankful and appreciate that which we have left in the way of people and memories—more so than we ever thought possible.

As you approach this Thanksgiving, if you haven't yet been able to make your adjustment, I hope you will feel what you must for now because whatever you are feeling is okay. It isn't until you have reached the place in your grief where the ability to make good choices returns to your life that you can make some important changes in how you approach the holidays.

I hope the transition from thankless to thankful will be soon in coming for you, for that will mean some peace has returned to your life. Above all, I do wish you peace during this holiday season. I wish you more of the same in the new year.

Mary Cleckley ~ TCF, Lawrenceville, GA



We need not walk alone.

“There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go.” —*Author Unknown*

Losing A Piece Of Me

by Tammie Thompson

Imagine someone has opened your chest with clawed hands, grabbed your heart in a crushing grip and torn it from your body. But you do not die. You remain alive—in agony. Agony that will continue for days, weeks, months and years.

This is what it feels like when your child dies. This is how I felt when my son Dale died, age two years and one day.

To hold the limp body of my precious child in my arms and feel its emptiness was pain that defies words. I sat cradling my beautiful child, knowing that I would never again see his smile, hear his laugh or feel his hand clinging to mine. I would never again hold his warm body close and breathe in the scent of his hair. I would never know the person he would have grown up to be.

I walked from the room knowing that I had seen and held my child for the last time ever.

I wondered why I still lived, and how I was supposed to keep going. I wanted to die; I wasn't suicidal—it's just that the only way to end my pain was death, and I ached to hold him in my arms again.

Never again will I feel 'whole.' My whole future is flavored by the loss of my son. A part of me went with him, and a gaping hole exists that his warm presence once filled.

I asked questions that no one could answer; Why did he die? Why not me instead? Death has struck close to me once—what if it happens again? What do I do now? How will I manage? Why am I still here?

I rode an emotional roller coaster. One moment I felt I was managing well—the next I was curled up in a corner pleading with God to take me, right now. I went for long periods where I did well and thought, “Okay, I've accepted it.” Then out of the blue, it hit me anew—“He's dead. God, he's really dead.” And I began a new round of grieving.

Gradually, I found that the lows weren't quite as low as the previous ones, and that I rose from them quicker. Then just when I thought I was cruising on a level piece of track, it dropped out from under me yet again.

I did this over and over and over, but living with it gradually became easier, and I even found that I could live a 'normal' life again, although it was a new normality.

I will never forget Dale. He will live forever in my heart and in my memories. Death makes him no less a part of our family. Living with the fact that my child has died does not mean forgetting. It means knowing and accepting that he is gone, but still holding close those precious memories. It means that my love for him does not change, but that I don't allow my grief for his death to over-rule my life forever.

It's about remembering that Dale would not expect nor want me to spend the rest of my life in misery. My new normality is not necessarily an unhappy one.

Dale's life and death is part of what makes me who I am. It has had an immense impact on the way I look at life, and although I wish he was still here, I know that I have grown from my experience.

Dale's official date of death is the 2nd of January, 1995, the day he was taken off life support, but I tend to think of the real date of his death as the 31st of December, 1994, the day he drowned. Even though his heart had been started again, he was gone.

As I write this, it's the 30th of December, 1998; Dale's 6th birthday. I wonder what he would look like now, and imagine him playing with his brothers, even as I sit here writing about his death.

We tend to celebrate his birthday rather than his death-day. To us it's more important that he was born than that he died. We choose to celebrate his life, not his death. It means more to us that he was here than that he left.

Remember? Always. Love? Eternally. Forget? Never.



The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, TX 75711

We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain excellent material relating to grief issues.

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. If we did not hear from you in the last year please indicate any appropriate choices below and return the form to the address at the bottom of this page.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please check any of following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

No thank you, I'd prefer to stop receiving the newsletter.

Please include my child's name and picture in the slide presentation at the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Please include my child's picture and information on the TCF-Tyler Web site. (www.TylerTCF.org)

I am enclosing a memorial to support The Compassionate Friends in the amount of _____
Please make check payable to TCF

In memory of _____

The continuation of this chapter's work depends on donations. If you have not taken the opportunity to give a donation in memory of your child please consider taking this time to give a gift that will help reach out to other newly bereaved parents.

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name and/or picture in the newsletter, Web site, Candle Lighting Ceremony or any other TCF event. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

(Signature) _____ Date: _____

Please return completed form to:
The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, TX 75711



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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We need not walk alone.



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