



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

*Rim Country Chapter
P.O. Box 3482
Payson, AZ 85547*

A national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause.

November 2007

RIM COUNTRY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

VOL. 1 NO. 6

MISSION

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.

Payson, Arizona Meeting Info

2nd Tuesday of the month -
6:30 PM—8:00 PM
Ponderosa Baptist Church
1800 N. Beeline Hwy
(Just South of Home Depot & the Roundabout)

Chapter Website

www.RimCountryTCF.org
E-mail Address
info@rimcountrytcf.org

Chapter Leaders:

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TCF NATIONAL OFFICE

P.O. BOX 3696,
OAKBROOK, IL 60522-3696
(877) 969-0010, FAX (630)
990-0246

CompassionateFriends.org

Regional Coordinator:
Gene Caligari 480-361-1877

CHAPTER NEWS

November 17 is National Survivors Of Suicide Day—for those survivors of suicide loss, there will be a 90-minute program broadcast on the AFSP Website from 1-2:30 p.m. eastern time, with a live online chat immediately following the broadcast. Register at http://www.limelightdc.com/clientarea/afsp_telecom_11_07/registerafsp.htm



**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday November 13, 2007
6:30 PM**

- Novembers Meeting Topic will be “Handling the Holidays”
- Our December meeting will be a candlelight memorial and potluck
ALL ARE WELCOME

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Worldwide candle lighting.....Dec. 9, 2007

BECAUSE

Because you can't feel me,
Doesn't mean I'm not there.
Because you can't see me,
Doesn't mean I'm not near.
Because you can't hear me,
Doesn't mean I don't speak.
Because you can't see me,
Doesn't mean I'm out of reach.
Because I am dead,
Doesn't mean I'm gone.

Beth Oldani

READY OR NOT... HERE THEY COME!!!

Try as you might, you can't escape the holiday season. Though it has been some years now, I still remember how I approached those first few holidays with fear and trepidation. I hadn't had the time necessary to know yet how the "new me" reacted to old situations. I didn't even want there to be a Thanksgiving or Christmas, for it meant I had to come face-to-face with the fact that my son wasn't going to be a part of them anymore. That brought out pain in me that I'm sure I don't need to explain to you.

But they came anyway, complete with turkey, trimmings, jingle bells and lots of ho ho ho's. Since a ho ho was hard for me to come by in those early years I didn't try. I fumed and fussed about what I was going to do, that first year in particular. What was left of my feeble brain deviled me to get an answer to the old question "What are you going to do to observe the holidays?"

I soon realized that if I tried to please everybody on the periphery of my life, I was going to please nobody. And since my needs were paramount it was only necessary that I work out something that afforded the least amount of pain for my husband, my daughter, and me.

I had several choices. Decide to do things as we always had done; decide to keep some of the old traditions, but introduce some new ones; or do as we eventually did-just ignore the whole thing. They laugh in the groups when I tell how my family spent Thanksgiving at the "Benihana of Tokyo" restaurant. Can't get any further away from tradition than that! But it was right for us.

As with many other things having to do with grieving for a child, there aren't any rules and regulations, and don't you believe anybody who tries to lay a bunch of them on you. My suggestion is this. Having gotten input from your immediate family as to their needs and wants; decide right now how you think you'd be most comfortable observing the holidays. Then make plans. Your brain will keep badgering you until it gets an answer any answer. It really doesn't care what you decide, but it wants an answer. So give it

one. You may decide at the last minute to do nothing you've said you would. It'll be too late then for your brain to devil you. This is true for all the holidays and any other day that is special. Just know that it's possible, still, for you to have some control over your life.

Remember, "Benihana of Tokyo" is always an option for you. Don't worry about making reservations. It just isn't a busy day for them somehow!!!

By: Mary Cleckley
Bereaved Mother
Lawrenceville, GA



THANKFUL VERSUS THANKLESS



This is the time of the year when many bereaved parents start saying out loud what newly bereaved parents have been thinking for weeks and weeks *I am really 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 the necessary time and the proper support, who are able to observe the holidays in a less painful way. We have kept some of those 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 the 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, but our lives have fullness again 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 to 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.

By: Mary Cleckley
Bereaved Mother
Lawrenceville, GA

REMEMBRANCE

In the light of day
I awake with thoughts of you.
In the dark of night
I sleep with thoughts of you.
Is it grief or disbelief?



A FORGIVING THANKSGIVING

By: Jim Hobbs
Bereaved Father
Denton, Texas

Thanksgiving was always an easy holiday. Unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the *right* gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful for our health, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying. I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family member recounts a story about something his or her child did last week. I wish for a story to tell. (Of course, when I say *no one else*, I exclude my wife and daughter. I'm sure they see, hear and wish what I do, although probably at different times.)

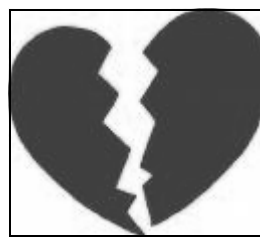
We still have much to be thankful for, we bereaved parents; and we should remember that. But now Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us, too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness, also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge the missing child, for whatever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must try to understand them, especially on holidays. If we can exhibit tolerance, forgiveness, and understanding on a day on which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery.

I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.

Printed from "Where Are All The Butterflies" with permission.

IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER

We can't see you here,
We can't talk to you here,
But we can see and talk to you
In our hearts forever.



We can't touch you here,
We can't kiss you here,
But we can touch and kiss you
In our hearts forever.

We will have aching hearts forever and ever,
We will have pain and grief for all tomorrows,
But we will always love you
In our hearts forever.

Marlene Kimmel Leff
Villanova, PA



THE HARVEST OF YOUR GRIEF WORK

By: Margaret Gerner
Bereaved Mother
St. Louis, MO

“It isn’t right! I go a month sometimes and don’t cry. I actually get involved in something and don’t think about my daughter for hours. I had fun at the company picnic last week.”

“I feel so guilty. Am I forgetting my daughter?”

This mother was two years into her grief. She was doing good grief work—leaning into the pain, talking out feelings, expressing emotions and attending *Bereaved Parent’s* meetings regularly. But she was hurting less.

When parents begin to reap the harvest of their grief work well done, they fear they are losing their children.

The truth is they are just reaping the harvest of their grief work done well.

In the first couple of years, pain ties us to our children. During that time we equate pain with love. By the time we are beginning to resolve our grief (and that is what is happening), pain has been our companion for so long we feel lost without it.

This is one of the few places in grief where our mind needs to take over for awhile. We need to look at the illogic of prolonged grieving. We need to see that we are beginning to reach the goal we hoped some day to reach.

Self talk can help us rid ourselves of this illogical emotion. Ask yourself:

- If you believe to keep your child in your heart for the rest of your life, you must hang onto the pain.
- Will your prolonged misery make your child less dead?
- Does the fact that your child is dead mean that you must die also?
- Does your prolonged misery accomplish anything? What purpose does it serve?
- Will hanging onto your pain make you grow and change, or will it make you unhappy and bitter?
- What effect will your prolonged grief have on your marriage and/or surviving children?
- Do you really want to stay in the pit indefinitely?
- Will your continuing grief honor your child?

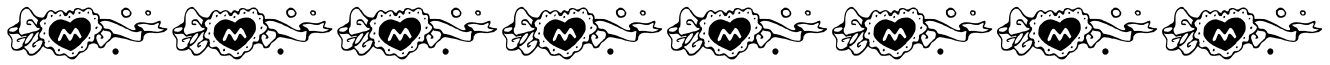
These questions can help you see that beginning grief resolution is as healthy and normal after a couple of years, as allowing yourself to enter fully into your grief in the early months after your child has died.

Rethink your reactions. Let yourself get to the other side of your grief.

Let yourself appreciate the peace and comfort that is beginning to be yours.

Most importantly, let yourself feel the joy of remembering your child without the deep searing pain you have felt for so long.





LOVE GIFTS AND DONATIONS

A love gift is to "REMEMBER THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN." Since TCF has no membership dues, we rely upon tax-deductible donations for funds to pay the three chapters' expenses: printing and mailing of our newsletter, books for our lending libraries, our 24-hour phone message line and information packets sent to newly bereaved families and professionals in the community. Books donated for our libraries and volunteer work for your chapter also qualify as "love gifts." Make your checks payable to The Compassionate Friends and mail to: PO Box 3482 Payson Arizona 85547. Love gifts received prior to the 10th of each month will appear in the following month's newsletter.

MEMORY PAGE

If you wish to have your child remembered on our Memory Page, please complete the form below and Mail to PO Box 3482, Payson Arizona 85547

PARENT(S) NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

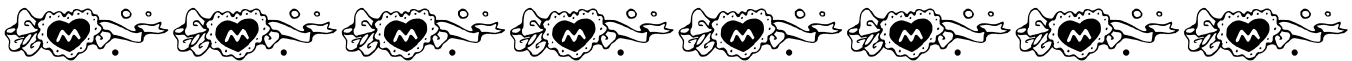
CHILD'S NAME _____ M or F (circle)

DATE OF BIRTH _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

Enclosed is a love gift in memory of my child to help deray costs of the Rim Country Chapter:

_____ \$5 _____ \$10 _____ \$25 _____ Other THANKS!!!!

The anniversary of your child's birth and death are often extremely painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents who are observing such days in August. In this newsletter is the memory page update. If you haven't sent one in yet, please take a moment to fill it out and send it in. We would like to share your memory days with you.



NOVEMBER MEMORY PAGE

Our children ... always loved, missed, remembered ...

JAMES GRAHAM...son of Robert Graham, died 11/1/1985

SARA MARIE COLEGROVE...daughter of Paul & Priscilla Maxfield, died 11/17/1977

Tips for Handling the Holidays



1. **DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE COMFORTABLY AND LET FAMILY AND FRIENDS KNOW.** Can I handle the responsibility of the family dinner, etc. or shall I ask someone else to do it? Do I want to talk about my loved one or not? Shall I stay here for the holidays or go to a completely different environment?
2. **MAKE SOME CHANGES IF THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** Open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning. Vary the timing of Chanukah gift giving. Have dinner at a different time or place. Let the children take over decorating the house, the tree, baking and food preparation, etc.
3. **RE-EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES: GREETING CARDS, HOLIDAY BAKING, DECORATING, PUTTING UP A TREE, FAMILY DINNER, ETC.** Do I really enjoy doing this? Is this a task that can be shared?
4. **CONSIDER DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR SOMEONE ELSE.** Donate a gift in the memory of your loved one. Donate money you would have spent on your loved one as a gift to charity. Adopt a needy family for the holidays. Invite a guest (foreign student, senior citizen) to share festivities.
5. **RECOGNIZE YOUR LOVED ONE'S PRESENCE IN THE FAMILY.** Burn a special candle to quietly include your loved one. Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings. Listen to music especially liked by the deceased. Look at photographs.
6. **IF YOU DECIDE TO DO HOLIDAY SHOPPING, MAKE A LIST AHEAD OF TIME AND KEEP IT HANDY FOR A GOOD DAY, OR SHOP THROUGH A CATALOGUE.**
7. **OBSERVE THE HOLIDAYS IN WAYS WHICH ARE COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** There is no right or wrong way of handling holidays. Once you've decided how to observe the time, let others know.
8. **TRY TO GET ENOUGH REST -- HOLIDAYS CAN BE EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINING.**
9. **ALLOW YOURSELF TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.** Holidays often magnify feelings of loss. It is natural to feel sadness. Share concerns, apprehensions, feelings with a friend. The need for support is often greater during holidays.
10. **KEEP IN MIND THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY BEREAVED PERSONS IS THAT THEY DO COME TO ENJOY HOLIDAYS AGAIN. THERE WILL BE OTHER HOLIDAY SEASONS TO CELEBRATE.**
11. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN.** Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holidays.





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***We need not walk alone... We
are The Compassionate Friends.***

E-mail us at info@rimcountrytcf.org or call us at 928-978-1492 if you receive this newsletter and do not wish to receive it or to change an address or add an address.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

**We need not walk alone. We
are The Compassionate
Friends.**

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.



We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source for strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in a deep depression; others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other grieve as well. as to grow.