



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

Rim Country Chapter
P.O. Box 3482
Payson, AZ 85547
(928) 978-1492

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

April 2009

RIM COUNTRY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

VOL. 3 NO. 4

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 Information

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

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CHAPTER NEWS

Thank you all who came out for our Adopted Highway clean up on March 13th. We found out that one mile is a long way when you're picking up litter. We were only able to finish the southbound side so we're planning a northbound work day soon. If you're interested in helping out, please let us know.



There is a lot going on within TCF in the next few months. The National Conference is being held in Portland, Oregon August 7-9 (see details inside). Also three leadership training programs are planned; one being held in May in Charlotte, NC another in September in Minneapolis and the third one being held in Portland the day before the National Conference begins. If you are interested in attending the National Conference or Leadership Training, please let us know. Our chapter will help with arrangements and some of the expenses.

We would also love to include in our newsletter any articles, poems, etc that you have written to honor your child's memory. Please email them to info@rimcountrytcf.org or mail to the P.O. Box.

Finally, by request from TCF National, we are no longer including the actual birthdate or anniversary date in the "Memory Page" section of the newsletter. For confidentiality reasons, only "the Month" will be included going forward.

Our meeting this month is on **Tuesday April 14th.**

If Only They Knew...

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For 26 years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self-indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him, I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, it's not in self pity for what I have lost; I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, ... for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death, if only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken: "time heals...you'll get over it," "it was for the best... God takes only the best," and realized that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we try to stand in the shoes of others. If only they knew that we will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

Jan McNess,
TCF- Victoria, Australia

The Little Things

Often even the simple tasks of everyday living seem to drain every ounce of one's energy. Remember going to the grocery store even months after your child's death and the feelings you had as you passed up his or her favorite cereal? Or watching another child the same age as yours in a restaurant and trying to swallow your food -- you probably didn't even taste it. Or hearing a certain song in public and fighting back the tears? Sometimes even getting through the day in your own home makes you feel like you've run a marathon and leaves you in worse shape. You probably never dreamed that doing the laundry could make you cry or getting a piece of mail in your child's name could suck your breath away.

Even the best of friends and families can't possibly know the strength you must summon day after day. We shouldn't expect them to understand completely, but it does get lonely.

Perhaps this quote puts it in a nutshell: "One sad thing about this world is that the acts that take the most out of you are usually the ones that other people will never know about."

Anne Tyler, Celestial Navigation
TCF- Sacramento Valley, CA

Easter Message—Faith

By Sister Madeline Contorno, Birmingham, Alabama Bereavement Mag, Jan/Feb 1997

Bad things happen to good people every day. Tragedy is an all-too-familiar experience, whether it is the sudden death of an infant, the suicide of a teenager, or advanced cancer in a young mother with three children. Tragedy has a way of touching the life of every person, saint and sinner alike, and frequently it overwhelms even the most faith-filled of people. How are people of faith to approach the pain of life?

As a hospice pastoral minister and social worker for the last several years, I have grappled with the meaning of suffering and death. I have witnessed the effects of suffering on the lives of hundreds of dying patients and their families. I am convinced there are no satisfying answers to why people must experience so much pain. But there are unique, personal, noble responses to suffering that people have taught me that have uplifted me, comforted me, strengthened my faith. No one can prevent tragedy. No one can be protected from tragedy. No one is exempt. But I believe that deep inside each human person is a power that can redeem tragedy. Time and again I have witnessed how people's response to suffering bears testimony to the power of resurrection within them.

People dealing with tragedy often ask, "Why me ... Why my family?" Denial, anger, depression, confusion and guilt are natural responses to hurt. All too frequently there may also be bitterness, withdrawal, conflict, resentment, hostility. But in the greater number of cases, I have found heroic courage, humility, tenderness and greatness of heart in people struggling with suffering. Their responses continually amaze me.

People somehow found a way to allow their pain to make them better people, they allow their pain to bring them closer to God. I have witnessed a power released within suffering people that is almost tangible. I witness this power again and again, and the reality of it brings me to my knees. The power seems to reside in the ability to surrender, to trust that the unknown future still holds something good, despite the pain and heartache of the present. This choice, this instinct to trust and somehow transcend the darkness, seems to be embedded in the human spirit, and was voiced by the Psalmist: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life". (Psalm 23:6).

Whereas tragedy can and does rob people of their most cherished life treasures, I see people of faith responding to tragedy by allowing God to take control. I see people acknowledge their powerlessness over the situation and yet they maintain their courage. They sense God's power within them as they struggle, and they implicitly recognize that God will remain with them until the end: "I know the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord ... plans for peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you. (Jeremiah 29:11).

The French artist, Renoir, once said, "Pain passes, but beauty remains." So often this is the unspoken, but lived response of people who face suffering with faith. Despite the harshness of pain, there is the triumphant hope that life can still be gracious and beautiful and worthwhile.

How do people of faith approach the tragedies of life? Not by avoiding pain, or denying it, or explaining it away. People of faith accept life as it is, surrendering to life's limitations, softening its blows with gentle strength and courageous trust. People of faith ask God to make them strong in all the broken places. People of faith allow the power of resurrection to take hold of their lives.

Any Child's Death Diminishes Me

What difference does it make whether a child is stillborn or dies after some years of life?

She spoke of the lack of memories because her child was stillborn.

He commented on the deep pain brought by those very memories which remind one of what is lost!

When it comes to a child's death, does the type of death matter? Is a murder worse than an accident? Suicide worse than chronic illness? Teenage worse than older adult? Stillborn worse than teenage?

I've tried to be thankful that Jeanie wasn't murdered. That she did not commit suicide. That she and those dear boys did not linger comatose. Or die from prolonged illness. I could not find thankfulness though I have sought diligently for it within my deepest being.

The death of a child, whatever the age or circumstance, brings its own guilt and anger. Its own despair and questioning. Any child's death diminishes the parents who loved that child. And, for those bereaved parents, that death is surely the worst. Their grief is the most severe!

Robert F. Gloor
TCF- Tuscaloosa, AL

Helping Yourself Heal When Your Child Dies

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Allow Yourself to Mourn

Your child has died. You are now faced with the difficult, but important, need to mourn. Mourning is the open expression of your thoughts and feelings regarding the death of your child. It is an essential part of healing. With the death of your child, your hopes, dreams and plans for the future are turned upside down. You are beginning a journey that is often frightening, painful, and overwhelming. The death of a child results in the most profound bereavement. In fact, sometimes your feelings of grief may be so intense that you do not understand what is happening. This article provides practical suggestions to help you move toward healing in your personal grief experience.

Realize Your Grief is Unique

Your grief is unique. No one will grieve in exactly the same way. Your experience will be influenced by a variety of factors: the relationship you had with the person who died; the circumstances surrounding the death; your emotional support system; and your cultural and religious background.

As a result of these factors, you will grieve in your own special way. Don't try to compare your experience with that of other people or to adopt assumptions about just how long your grief should last. Consider taking a "one-day-at-a-time" approach that allows you to grieve at your own pace.

Allow Yourself to Feel Numb

Feeling dazed or numb when your child dies may well be a part of your early grief experience. You may feel as if the world has suddenly come to a halt. This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you.

You may feel you are in a dream-like state and that you will wake up and none of this will be true. These feelings of numbness and disbelief help insulate you from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you don't want to believe.

This Death is "Out of Order"

Because the more natural order is for parents to precede their children in death, you must readapt to a new and seemingly illogical reality. This shocking reality says that even though you are older and have been the protector and provider, you have survived while your child has not. This can be so difficult to comprehend. Not only has the death of your child violated nature's way, where the young grow up and replace the old, but your personal identity was tied to your child. You may feel impotent and wonder why you couldn't have protected your child from death.

Expect to Feel a Multitude of Emotions

The death of your child can result in a variety of emotions. Confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, anger and relief are just a few of the emotions you may feel. Sometimes these emotions will follow each other within a short period of time. Or they may occur simultaneously.

As strange as some of these emotions may seem, they are normal and healthy. Allow yourself to learn from these feelings. And don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief, even at the most unexpected times. These grief attacks can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed. They are, however, a natural response to the death of your child. Find someone who understands your feelings and will allow you to talk about them.

Be Tolerant of Your Physical and Emotional Limits

Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you fatigued. Your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be impaired. And your low-energy level may naturally slow you down.

Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Nurture yourself. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. Lighten your schedule as much as possible. Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself it means you are using survival skills.

Talk About Your Grief

Express your grief openly. When you share your grief outside yourself, healing occurs. Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking about it often makes you feel better. Allow yourself to speak from your heart, not just your head. Doing so doesn't mean you are losing control or going "crazy." It is a normal part of your grief journey.

Watch Out for Clichés

Clichés--trite comments some people make in attempts to diminish your loss--can be extremely painful for you to hear. Comments like, "You are holding up so well," "Time heals all wounds," "Think of what you have to be thankful for" or "You have to be strong for others" are not constructive. While these comments may be well-intended, you do not have to accept them. You have every right to express your grief. No one has the right to take it away.

Develop a Support System

Reaching out to others and accepting support is often difficult, particularly when you hurt so much. But the most compassionate self-action you can do at this difficult time is to find a support system of caring friends and relatives who will provide the understanding you need. Seek out those people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings -- both happy and sad.

A support group may be one of the best ways to help yourself. In a group, you can connect with other parents who have experienced the death of a child. You will be allowed and gently encouraged to talk about your child as much, and as often, as you like.

Sharing the pain won't make it disappear, but it can ease any thoughts that what you are experiencing is crazy, or somehow bad. Support comes in different forms for different people -- support groups, counseling, friends, faith -- find out what combination works best for you and try to make use of them.

Embrace Your Treasure of Memories

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of a child. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends.

Keep in mind that memories can be tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's all right to cry. Memories that were made in love -- no one can take them away from you.

Gather Important Keepsakes

You may want to collect some important keepsakes that help you treasure your memories. You may want to create a memory book, which is a collection of photos that represent your child's life. Some people create memory boxes to keep special keepsakes in. Then, whenever you want, you can open your memory box and embrace those special memories. The reality that your child has died does not diminish your need to have these objects. They are a tangible, lasting part of the special relationship you had with your child.

Embrace Your Spirituality

If faith is part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you are angry at God because of the death of your child, realize this feeling as a normal part of your grief work. Find someone to talk with who won't be critical of whatever thoughts and feelings you need to explore.

You may hear someone say, "With faith, you don't need to grieve." Don't believe it. Having your personal faith does not insulate you from needing to talk out and explore your thoughts and feelings. To deny your grief is to invite problems to build up inside you. Express your faith, but express your grief as well.

Move toward Your Grief and Heal

To restore your capacity to love you must grieve when your child dies. You can't heal unless you openly express your grief. Denying your grief will only make it become more confusing and overwhelming. Embrace your grief and heal.

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself. Never forget that the death of your child changes your life forever. It's not that you won't be happy again, it's simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the child died.

The experience of grief is powerful. So, too, is your ability to help yourself heal. In doing the work of grieving, you are moving toward a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in your life.

Save the Date!
The Compassionate Friends

2009 National Conference

August 7-9, 2009 ~ Portland Oregon

A TCF National Conference is an event unlike any other you may ever attend; where bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents are able to share with others walking the same grief journey. Every person comes for the same reason—a child has died. It is a place where “friendship, understanding, and hope” are more than just words. It is a place where you can go and know that you truly are not alone as you travel your grief journey.

This is combined with well-known speakers, great entertainment, and more than 100 workshops covering most areas of grief after the death of a child.

For over three decades The Compassionate Friends has held national conferences. They've been held all over the country. Today it's normal to have 1100-1400 bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents attend. Of that number, it usually is the first conference for nearly 40 percent. Those new to TCF conferences wear a special butterfly sticker so that others may notice and give them special hugs. Everyone feels welcome. We often say that these are friends you simply have not yet met.

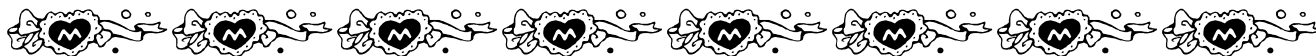
At each conference, there are many activities, but you decide what is right for you. There are more than 100 workshops (but don't think these are work—they're really a time for learning and sharing). Many areas of grief are covered by the workshops. There are workshops for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. And there will be many workshops for those who have no surviving children. You'll find a hospitality room, a reflection room, the Butterfly Boutique, and a complete bookstore. There are very interesting and well-known speakers who address the Opening Session, the Friday afternoon banquet, the Saturday evening banquet, and the Sunday closing. You'll marvel at the quality of entertainment geared for those attending. There's also a special candle lighting ceremony to conclude the Saturday evening banquet.

Speakers:

Candy Lightner, the dynamic founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) . The conference will also feature Reg and Maggie Green, whose remarkable story was made into a TV movie called *The Nicholas Effect*, and Michele Longo Eder, author of *Salt in our Blood – The memoir of a Fisherman's Wife*.

Those of us who have walked through our grief - and found there is a future - are the ones who must meet others in the valley of darkness and bring them to the light.

Rev. Simon Stephens
Founder, TCF- Coventry, England



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 chapters expenses: printing and mailing of our newsletter, books for our lending libraries, our 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 23rd 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 _____

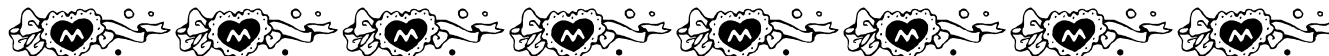
CHILD'S NAME _____ M or F (circle)

DATE OF BIRTH _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

Enclosed is a love gift in memory of my child to help defray 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 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.



APRIL MEMORY PAGE

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

**DAVID ADAM ZEHNDER... Son of Ricki Aiken
SLADE DAVID GIBSON... Son of Slade & Becky Gibson
GREG POPPEN... Son of Daryl & Karen Poppen**

APRIL LOVE GIFT

DEK Family Foundation In Memory of Dalton William Knauss



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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 would like to submit articles, be added to or removed from this newsletter mail list or to correct information.

Newsletter printing & mailing donated by Able Steel Fabricators in memory of Cory James Clark

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**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.