



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
Rim Country Chapter

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

## Supporting Family After a Child Dies

November 2010

**RIM COUNTRY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER**

VOL. 4 NO. 11

### **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**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month -  
Doors open at 6:15PM  
Meeting Begins at 6:30 PM

102 W Roundup  
(Just South of Home Depot &  
the Roundabout)

#### **Chapter Website**

[www.RimCountryTCF.org](http://www.RimCountryTCF.org)  
E-mail Address  
[info@rimcountrytcf.org](mailto:info@rimcountrytcf.org)

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#### **Regional Coordinator:**

Gene Caligari 480-361-1877

We had our first meeting in the new building and everyone agreed that it is a great place to have our monthly get together. Just as a reminder for those who have not visited in a while, we now meet at 102 W Roundup. It's just 100 or so yards south of the church building where we used to meet.

It was a good meeting last month with a variety of topics covered. We talked about our recent butterfly release which led to one member asking what it means when a butterfly lands on someone's shoulder. After doing a little research, I found that Native American legends say that the butterfly is a symbol of transformation, the caterpillar changing into the beautiful butterfly. And when the butterfly lands on your shoulder, it is comforting you from something that you have lost that has caused devastation. It is also said that it is your loved one's way of letting you know everything is okay with them. I just know that when one hung around me recently for 20 minutes or so, it WAS comforting... and very cool.

I also want to express our sympathy to Chris Taylor on the loss of Tom, her husband of nearly 36 years. Tom was an integral part of our group and he is most certainly missed.

Our next regular meeting will be on **NOVEMBER 9th at 6:30PM**. If your child's birthday or "Angelversary" occurs in November, please bring your child's favorite treat to share. Feel free to also bring a picture or remembrance of your child to display.

**May your Thanksgiving be filled with reasons to be thankful! Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most wonderful reason of all.**

Wishing you peace, *Bill*

### For the Newly Bereaved.....

There is no detour around bereavement. There is no short cut in the mourning process. It must be worked through. As you are empty, so is the world around you. You are living a nightmare. You think, "I have touched the bottom of despair. I can't go any farther".

You do go farther.....you may cry hysterically, or you may remain outwardly controlled, showing little emotion. Reactions are varied and contradictory. Not all questions have answers. Unanswered whys are parts of life. You reject the overtures of your friends. How dare they talk of your future when you know life holds nothing for you? Your heart is breaking --- and they offer you clichés. Accept their companionship, but you need not take their advice. Do what is best for you.

Grief is universal. At the same time it is extremely personal. Heal in your own way. Of course, your weeping will not bring back your loved one, but that's why you cry --- because you cannot bring your beloved one back to life.

Mental health is the recognition of pain and the attempt to live with it. This depression is not weakness; it is part of the mournful work of saying "good-bye" to your beloved. You are more aware than before of what is significant and what is trivial.

From *Living When a Loved One Has Died*, by Rabbi Earl Grollman

We are a self-help support organization that is dedicated to assisting parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child. We also aim to provide information and education to extended family, friends and co-workers desirous of being supportive to our Chapter members.

We gather to listen, to care, and to understand the process of grieving as we start our recovery process and attempt to heal. Our greatest strength as bereaved families is the unity we find in shared experiences which can lead us out of isolation, give us a place to "belong", and offer us hope that together – we can make it.

Some people  
come into our  
*lives*  
and quickly go. Others stay  
for a while leaving footprints  
on our hearts and we are  
**FOREVER**  
*changed.*

Can you see the change in me? It may not be so obvious to you.

I participate in family activities. I attend family reunions. I help plan holiday meals.

You tell me you're glad to see that I don't cry anymore.

But I do cry. When everyone has gone—when it is safe—the tears fall.

I cry in privacy so my family won't worry.  
I cry until I am exhausted and can finally sleep.

I'm active in church. I sing the hymns. I listen to the sermon. You tell me you admire my strength and my positive attitude.

But I'm not strong. I feel that I have lost control, and I panic when I think about tomorrow...  
Next week... next month... next year.

I go about the routine of my job. I complete my assigned tasks. I drink coffee and smile.

You tell me you're glad to see I'm "over" the death of my loved one.

But I'm not "over" it. If I get over it, I will be the same as before my loved one died. I will never be the same.

At times I think I am beginning to heal, but the pain of losing someone I loved so much has left a permanent scar on my heart.

I visit my neighbors. You tell me you're glad to see I'm holding up so well.

But I am not holding up well. Sometimes I want to lock my door and hide from the world.

I spend time with friends. I appear calm and collected. I smile when appropriate.

You tell me it's good to see me back to my "old self".

But I will never be back to my "old self". Death and grief have touched my life.

And I am forever changed.

Rhonda Wilson, Asheboro, NC

## 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

Healing from the death of your child is much like wisdom;  
it can't be forced, yet it comes upon you if you let it.

~ Dr. Tom Frantz, Member, TCF, Buffalo, NY

## A FORGIVING THANKSGIVING

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.

By: Jim Hobbs—Bereaved Father—Denton, Texas



### **Matthew 5:4**

**Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.**

## 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.

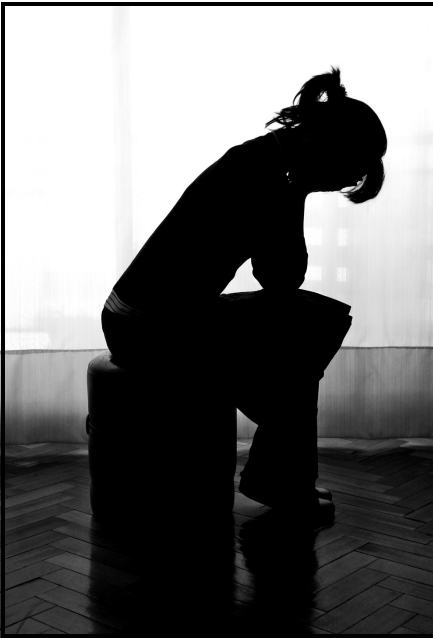
As you approach this Thanksgiving, if you haven't yet been able to make your adjustment, I hope you will feel what you must for now because whatever you are feeling is okay. It isn't until you have reached the place in your grief where the ability to make good choices returns to your life that you can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

## THE HARVEST OF YOUR GRIEF WORK

“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.

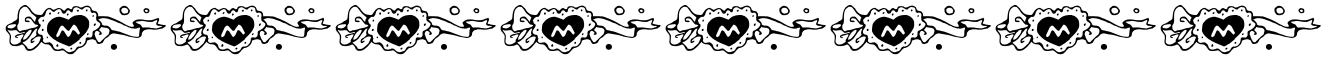
Self talk can help us rid ourselves of this illogical emotion. Ask yourself:

- 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.

By: Margaret Gerner, Bereaved Mother, St. Louis, MO



**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.

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

**November 2010 MEMORY PAGE**

- Aaron Gaal... Son of Karen & Kirby Gaal**
- Aaron Kelly Gardner... Son of Mary Ann Gardner**
- James Gillen Graham... Son of Bob Graham**
- William Frank Manning... Son of Patricia Irvin**
- Joshua G Oakland... Son of Jim Oakland**

**November 2010 LOVE GIFTS**

- Jack & Barbara Gooch in memory of KAITIE GOOCH**
- Jim & Sue Scovel in memory of RANDY K. WOOD**
- Michael & Eileen Carnow in memory of Kevin John Carnow**



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***We Need not Walk Alone.....  
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E-mail us at [info@rimcountrytcf.org](mailto: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.

## **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

### **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. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them 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, creeds, and relationships. 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 they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while 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 the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to 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 to grieve as well as to grow.**

**We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.**