



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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FEBRUARY 2010

WALKING THIS VALLEY—Tucson Chapter VOL. 27, NO. 02

TUCSON CHAPTER MEETINGS

Catalina United Methodist Church
2700 E. Speedway Room H-232
7:00 —9:00 PM

February 10

February 24

March 10

March 24

BULLETIN!!!

**TUCSON CHAPTER of THE
COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
CATALINA METHODIST CHURCH
2700 E. SPEEDWAY**

TEMPORARY WESTSIDE ENTRANCE TO CHURCH!

The TCF Chapter's regular room is under renovation. We are meeting in the Chapel on the WEST side of the Church. There is a large parking lot in back of Baskin Robbins. Walk past the cross-fountains to the Chapel entrance. We'll have signs to help guide you.

Everyone can master a grief but he that has it.

William Shakespeare

THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF

By

Chuck Priestwood

Jackson, MS TCF
(13 September, 1993)

When a child dies, parents and other family members begin a journey. Too often this journey is down a path that we've never been. We don't know what's ahead or where the journey will end. We are frightened! Although every journey has a different map, most persons on these journeys make stops at the same places, not in the same order, but eventually.

The journey starts upon notification of the death. Our first stop is usually a place called **Shock, Denial, and Numbness**. Here things don't feel real. *We think: This can't be true; it's not happening to me. I'll wake up soon and this will all be a terrible dream.* While here, we may go days and weeks with little or no feelings of any kind, just zombie-like numbness. We function but it's like being on automatic pilot. We do very little thinking—just existing.

We often stop at a place called **Anger**. We are so mad. Mad that we did not, somehow, prevent the death. Mad that the pain is so intense and nothing takes it away. We blame God, for after all, He could have aborted this death with no more than a whisper of His breath. We lash out at people we love. We have little tolerance here for others. We're mad that others go on enjoying life and don't notice us in our despair.

We may experience intense pain as we leave this place. As the numbness wears off and the reality of the loss settles in, we start to feel again and the feelings are painful. It hurts,. How can we go on with this pain? It's unbearable and non-relenting. No one

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Welcome

All bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are welcome at our support group meetings. You will find a place of comfort, caring people, and most of all - HOPE. Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and much to gain. We urge you to give it a try. For many it is the first real step toward healing. Although it may seem overwhelming, we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable. We are not professional counselors. We are bereaved families who want to help each other. Please join us as we heal together.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Feel free to call **(520) 721-8042**. A member will contact you. We can put you in contact with members who have experienced similar losses: auto accidents, infant death, suicide, murder, unknown, etc.

Visit our WEBSITE at:

www.tucsontcf.org

Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Kathie Davis & Carl Luikart

*Editors.....*Sam & Phyllis Turner
*Contributing Editors.....*Sara Moore & Caroline Dodge
*Outreach.....*Kathy Parfrey
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REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Barb & Gene Caligari
Chandler, AZ

If you would like someone to receive a copy of this newsletter, call (520) 721-8042.

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Robert W. Studinger, CPA, 7407 E. Tanque Verde Road, Tucson, AZ 85715

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Bring Funeral Homes, 236 S. Scott Avenue Tucson, Arizona 85701 For partial underwriting our World Wide Candle Lighting Service.

TO OUR "COOKIE & TREAT PROVIDERS"

Or fruit or veggies:

(Two volunteers per meeting, please!)

Remember to sign the COOKIE SHEET.

Feb 10: Bev Waldenson

Maureen Luikart!

Feb 24: Ginger Pease

Allie & Don Mathews

March 10: Dan Pierce

Phyllis Turner

March 24: Dolores Bain

Love Gifts are a way of remembering your child and supporting your local Chapter.

Thank you to all who contribute and support . Checks should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends, Tucson Chapter, and mailed to **TCF, P.O. Box 30733, Tucson, AZ 85751. (Please designate: RENT, PHONE, or PRINTING.)**

Check with your employer how you can donate to The Compassionate Friends through non-profit payroll deduction.
Kenneth P & Kay Rosburg in memory of all our children

Grant & Barb Vondersaar in memory of their daughter, Julie
Karen Lea Cruce in memory of all of our Children

Raytheon Company in memory of all of our Children

Leah Kovits in memory of her son, Eric

THIS MIGHT HELP**BY****Sam & Phyllis Turner**

January 30th was our son's birthday. It doesn't seem possible that he would be thirty-six. (He died in 1997.) We'll probably go to Agua Caliente Park east of Tucson and spend some quiet time remembering the fun we had with Rob. We'll probably cry a little.

That's how we'll cope.

"How do you cope?" This was the question that moved around the circle, recently. Some of us were two or three months into this valley; some were three or four years; some were over ten years.

The answers varied from *not sleeping to immersing oneself in their work.*

The following are some tips for Creative Grieving as offered by Darcie Sims. Some may seem a little silly but nevertheless are worth reading:

- Allow yourself to hurt. When your child died, a part of you died also. Acknowledge that you are in for long term stress.
- Be yourself.
- Realize that everyone reacts differently. We each have a self-regulating time clock. Do not rush or let yourself be rushed by others in your grieving process.
- Tell people what is happening to you. Don't assume that people know that you are having a bad day.
- Faith does not preclude grief.
- Keep your sense of humor. It is your ticket to sanity.
- Balloons serve a useful purpose. Take them with you, stash them here and there. As you blow up a balloon, blow your anger stress, hurt and whatever else you wish into it. Then let it all fly across the room or wherever you are. People will understand because "you're bereaved" and bereaved people are expected to act a bit crazy now and then.
- Break something—such as garage sale china.
- Tear paper. Pound something on a workbench with a hammer. Beat a pillow. Knead bread. Dig fence post holes.
- Tear down fences and build up communications.
- Practice hugging.

- Listen to music. Music can be very therapeutic.
- Paint—pictures, rooms, the house.
- Clean house—get rid of clutter.
- Exercise—walk, jog, run or whatever you like to do.
- Cry—feel sad. Understand that sadness won't last forever. When nothing works on a BAD DAY, buy something. Buy something, large or small, even something silly.
- Break a small rule—for instance, tear the DO NOT REMOVE tag off of your mattress.
- Change something in your life. Change your perspective, yourself. Realize that you will never be the same as you were before your child died. Acknowledge it little by little—quietly, gently. *Begin to become the person you are.*

When our children died, we lost our innocence, but have gained compassion and understanding. Make a decision to come into life with the changes that have happened already.

Our children have died, but never the love.

And this brings us full circle. How we cope is up to us. We all must acquire our own way to cope. The circles of Compassionate Friends can certainly help. Listening to others can help. Telling your own story can help. One evening's meeting may be an epiphany for you. Something *you* say may be solid gold for another person. We never know. What we *do know* is that attending the meetings helps.

For some of you, the month of February is high in anxiety because of a pending anniversary. Know that we send our heartfelt wishes for you to have the strength to survive.

**In love and light,
Sam and Phyllis Turner,
Rob's parents.**

We get letters:

Dear Editors,

I cried reading the front page article by Pat. I was uplifted by your TMH on p. 3. Laudits to you both for another fine issue. (I found NO errors!!) ...AND I lighted my candle, thinking most especially of your family and from what I read, I wish I could have been at your Candle lighting service on December 7. Yes, HAPPY NEW YEAR, whatever that means!

With sincere thanks,
(Name withheld by request)

Hi Kathy,

I just want to thank you and the group for being so kind and welcoming to Laura and me. ... I felt like I didn't get a chance to thank everyone for their kindness, support and words of encouragement at a time that was so confusing to me. The group serves such an amazing purpose and I am so glad you were all there for me when I needed you. You never know, I may come back but for now, please extend my thanks to all and especially, you, for your kindness and support.

Sincerely,
Elaine S. Wilson (Brian's mom)

Sam:

I'm sure these thoughts are ones you have already had:

I was thinking about the calling of care you all are providing through Compassionate Friends which leads to my belief that many of us will never know if we have had any impact during our time here. In Rob's case his gift was in his leaving. Look at the incredible numbers of people he has touched through you. What a wonderful tribute to those lives that the touch of Compassionate Friends gives. It's God's work and what a celebration of those lives as each one reaches out to comfort someone new.

Love,
Janice



2nd Annual 5K Memorial Walk
Sunday, March 21, 2010
Reid Park at DeMeester Bandshell

7:00 a.m. Registration Sign In
8:00 a.m. Walk

Information: contact Terri Gastelum at
tmgastel@aol.com

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seems to understand. We feel alone even though we're among friends and family. Our journey continues.

In our search to find a way to deal with this anger, sometimes the journey brings us to another destination called **Depression**. Here, this anger turned inward, drags down our will to live. Some of us sleep all the time trying to escape while others can't sleep at all. Some of us stop eating, while some of us eat all the time. We find ourselves doing almost anything.

Some of us have to stop for a while at **Guilt**. Some don't stop because they are unaware that they have this feeling because it hides about such feelings as: "What if...," "If I had only...," "It's my fault because...," etc. And we don't associate these feelings with guilt. Because we don't, we don't deal with it. When there is some "real" guilt, this needs immediate attention, but for the majority of us, our guilt is "imagined." Being honest with ourselves, we know that we did all that any loving, caring parent would do under the circumstances we were in at the time of our child's death. We acted as responsible parents. Now we can move on.

Move on to where? It would help if this journey were as predictable as it has been described. The truth is, some of us will stop at other places along the way; some of us will stay longer in some places than others, and most of us will vacillate back and forth among the stops. We make one step forward and slide back three. Some of us travel longer than others—but that's okay, too.

We keep on going. The quest for peace becomes a passion, and we must find it. Eventually, we do and the journey ends. We find a resting place called **Healing and Recovery** where we once again find

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Have you visited the on-line **MEMORIAL PAGE?** We now have over thirty-seven names listed.

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enjoyment in life and experience peace.

What does “ending the journey” mean? For many of us, ending the journey means remembering without the pain, remembering the life instead of the death. The grief—that pain and suffering experienced from the loss—is lessened or gone. We are changed, and yes, we will always be bereaved, but we won’t always be in grief. Healing has taken place.

Avoiding the journey will only postpone the healing. Grief must be experienced for healing to occur.

TCF “Online Support Community” Offers Opportunities for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national website offers “virtual chapters” through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you’re experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include “Pregnancy and Infant Loss,” “Bereaved 2 Years and Under,” “Bereaved 2 years and Over,” “Men Only Sharing Session,” “No Surviving Children,” “Survivors of Suicide.” There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click “Online Support” in the “Resources” column.

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

FOREVER IN MY HEART wristbands are in! They are \$3.00 each or two for \$5.00. If you are unable to come to meetings and would like to order some, send check to: The Compassionate Friends, Tucson Chapter, PO Box 30733, Tucson, AZ 85751-0733

TCF NATIONAL ORGANIZATION NOW ON FACEBOOK

Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization’s new Facebook page by becoming a fan. You can get there by clicking on the link from TCF’s national website home page at

www.compassionatefriends.org. Or, you can log into Facebook and search for The Compassionate Friends/USA.

“We want this to be both an informative and supportive place for those of us who are mourning the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild,” says TCF’s Executive Director Patricia Loder. “All are welcome to leave messages and talk about the child and their grief. As in our meetings, we especially appreciate shared insights about anything that has brought you comfort, hope, or some measure of peace.”

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 after day.

We should not 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.”

~Ann Tyler from *Celestial Navigation*

Sibling Page

I AM YOUR SISTER and ALWAYS WILL BE

"I am your sister and always will be." That's how Susie signed her cards to me. After a while, she shortened it to, "I am..." and of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and one-half years younger. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found. Whatever it was—it ended her life and changed mine forever.

There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn't pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a good mood, her smiles warmed my heart.

Yet I spent most of my life wishing that things were different: wishing that she thought more of herself; wishing that she would take my advice; wishing that she were happier; wishing that we could accept each other.

For two years, I've done nothing but wish she were here so we could have another chance to work at our relationship. Now, I wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love & support. (She needed it and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been alone. Now, I wish that I could have held her in my arms and told her how very much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister
and
always will be.

Michele Walters, TCF, Baltimore, MD

**What the caterpillar
calls the end,
the rest of the world
calls a butterfly.**

Lao Tzu

BIG PART OF ME

by Natasha B. McFadden

You're my big brother,
the one who's always there.
But because I've never met you,
no one realizes how much I care.

God called you back home,
before I was even alive.
How could he let his happen,
when you were only five?

My love for you is unconditional,
though we've never met.
When I think about never meeting,
I can't help but get upset.

You give me courage,
and help me to stay strong.
You give me the confidence to keep going,
when my days seem way to long.

And even when I don't show it,
and no one else can see.
You're always on my mind,
you're a big part of me.

Found at <http://www.bereavement-poems-articles.com/>

If this is your first time:

You may find that you don't function at normal capacity. We must re-evaluate our priorities and decide what is best for our emotional survival. Holidays are those times when family and friends gather for fun. It may not be associated with one of the traditional days of celebration.

Decide what you can handle comfortably and let those needs be known to family, friends, and relatives. (whether or not to talk about your child openly) Maybe responsibility for family dinners, parties will best be handled by someone else. Have your own transportation so you don't have to stay any longer than you wish.

Make changes if you need to. "But, we've always celebrated the birthday like this." If you think it will upset you, change it. Our greatest comfort may

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come in doing something for others. Some parents feel they can acknowledge their loss more meaningfully by: giving a gift in memory of their child; donating the money we would have spent on our child's gift to a meaningful charity; inviting a guest (foreign student, senior citizen, someone who would otherwise be alone) to share our festivities.

At family dinners burn a special candle to quietly include your child/sibling .

Ask these questions of yourself: Have I involved or considered other family members? Do I really enjoy doing this? Do other family members enjoy doing this? Is it done out of habit, free choice, or obligation? Is this a task that can be shared by other family members?

Evaluate your coping plans. Do your plans isolate you from those who love and support you best?

Let your plans and limits be known. Schedule a family meeting in which each person can share his or her feelings.

Don't be afraid to have fun. Enjoyment, laughter, and pleasure are not experiences in which you abandon your lost child. You have not forgotten him or her. Your child would not want you to be forever sad; you need not feel guilty over any enjoyment you may experience. Give yourself and members of your family permission to celebrate and take pleasure in each gathering.

REMEMBER: Take one day at a time. Be realistic. It is most important to recognize that fatigue can be deadly and lead to feelings of depression under the best of circumstances. Don't over-extend, don't over-commit. Set limits and do those things which are meaningful to ourselves and our families. Eliminate the unnecessary and reduce the pressures on yourself and others. Know that whatever you choose to do the first year, you may decide to do differently next year. It is not a choice of pain or no pain, but how we manage the pain we feel. Do what is comfortable for you and your family. It may help to know what other members of The Compassionate Friends have been through. Anticipation is frequently worse than the day itself.

As you seek to make sensible plans, remember to make them firm enough to support you, but flexible enough to leave you some freedom.

TCF, Northern New

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

**For every valley there's a hilltop
for each raindrop there is sun;
For each twilight there's a dawning
when dark hours at night are done.
For each thistle there's a flower,
for each teardrop there's a smile;
And sorrow will give way to joy
in just a little while.**

Jon Gilbert

CHANGES

Be aware that new grief
changes all of your emotions
for a time.

But grief does not change
all of your emotions
forever!

Some of your old feelings
will return to you.

Please be patient.

Sascha Wagner

THE TCF CREDO: We Need Not Walk Alone

We are *The Compassionate Friends*. We reach out to each other with love, understanding and 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 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 and relationships. We are young; we are old. Some of us are far along in our a 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; 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 who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that 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 grieve as well as to grow. **WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS!**

TCF 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.

OTHER TUCSON SUPPORT GROUPS

Listed are some local support groups besides *The Compassionate Friends*. In addition to these organizations, Tucson has a number of general grief support groups.

Information & Referral Services.....325-2111

Arizona SIDS Alliance.....800-597-SIDS

Survivors Of Suicide.....323-9373

Homicide Survivors, Inc740-5729

FOOTPRINTS - Pregnancy and Infant loss 873-6590

AGAST (Alliance of Grandparents,),888-774-7437

Tu Nidito/Children to Children322-9155

Alive Alone for (now) childless parents,

www.alivealone.org

MISS FOUNDATION www.missfoundation.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Tucson, AZ 85751-0733

PO Box 30733

THE TUCSON CHAPTER



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

A national self-help, non-profit organization for families who have experienced the death of a child.

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