

Our Mission & Purpose *is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age by any cause and to provide information to help others be supportive.*

Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

Herb's Hodgepodge

I seem to have put the newsletter in a 'stay tuned' mode as the second in a series of three articles on the 'F' word, (Fear) is included. Stay tuned for number three. Additionally, if you are the type of person that enjoys lists, we have generated two lists; the first is "How my life has changed as a result of my child dying – my new normal" and is presented in the issue. Stay tuned for the list about "How I cope with grief" in our next newsletter.

As I began to collect material for this issue, I realized that I had not been very active with my camera. For a warm weather, cold-avoiding, southerner, winter does not offer much to whet my appetite. Our local butterfly house does not open until later in April, it's too early and cold for butterflies in the wild, and most of the spring flowers have only tiny buds. My neighbor, an avid outdoor person, has some trees with beautiful blooms on them. I love looking at his yard and have included a picture of his trees on

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Our Vision *is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.*

Our Meetings: Monthly, every third Sunday, 2-4 pm
Renasant Bank, Balmoral Drive, Huntsville, AL
Information 256-883-0997

Personal Contacts

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to hear from you. If you can't reach a particular person, please call another and make contact.

We Need Not Walk Alone

Illness..... Sharon & Jerry
(256) 882-0642 illness@tcfhuntsville.org

Accident Pam
(256) 534-1873 accident@tcfhuntsville.org

Substance Abuse..... Jane & Herb
(256) 883-0997 substance_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org

Suicide Ray
(256) 650-0381 suicide@tcfhuntsville.org

Website..... <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org>
Email tcf@tcfhuntsville.org

Additional Resources:

Hospice Family Care HOPE..... Huntsville
(256) 650-1212

TCF National Office ... (877) 969-0010
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

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page 1. I feel sorry for him living next door to a bereaved father.

A few weeks ago we broached the idea of establishing a children's memorial garden in the Huntsville Madison county area. Kim Houser, the leader of another local support group, The Circle of Hope, and I went downtown to talk to the city director of parks. The biggest obstacle will be to find some land for the garden but we will continue to pursue this idea following the guidelines provided from the TCF national office. As we make progress I will keep you informed.

The steering committee wants to encourage our members to participate at the TCF conference in Portland, OR. August 7-9, 2009. We have decide to purchase up to six separate conference registration fees (2 per family maximum) to help defray total expenses for those who actually attend the conference. Details will be sent under separate email.

Our name is Compassionate Friends; have you ever tried to define the word compassion in the context of a bereaved parent? Be sure and read Sascha's definition.

Our feature article is about Becky's son Adam; a US Marine who died during combat in Iraq. Her descriptions of her feelings about his death and experiences of the military procedures are riveting. I have been active in TCF for over 4 years and cannot remember reading about a bereaved parent whose child died while in combat. I know that by sharing parts of her story, Becky will touch other families in a similar situation; there must be many.

As always, send in ideas or short articles & essays for our newsletter; tell us what is meaningful and what isn't. We solicit your help. Help us help you.

May your memories never fade – **Herb** (Co-Leader)



Poetry and Prose by Sascha

Ed Note: The Compassionate Friends holds the copyright to all Sascha Waggoner works.

APRIL

Time for jesting?
Time for laughter?

And if you are not ready,
not yet,
to remember something
that makes you laugh,

Tell April to be patient.
Take your time.

FATHER'S DAY

Warm and sunny day in June,
father's day.
Children, small and grown
give gifts to father
say thanks to father
say I love you.

But there are fathers
whose children are not here
to give gifts and say thanks
and say I love you.

Remember the fathers
whose children are gone,
because all too often
they grieve in heartbreak silence.

Compassion

Compassion is such an easy word, yet it is not at all easy to achieve. Compassion means suspending one's own critical and advisory inclinations to help someone. Compassion is leaving oneself outside. Compassion is not approval.

What the other person may need is often not at all what the compassionate helper believes to be helpful. The helper may want to give advice, or talk about himself/herself. What the griever needs, however, may well be a listener, a focused attention on the griever and on the loss the griever sustained.

Often, compassion means not doing something-listening rather than speaking, crying rather than comforting with words.

Compassion is not an easy task, but it is among the greatest gift we can give to each other.

Our New Normal

TCF Huntsville and Hospice Family Care each conducted a session trying to define what a normal way of life is now. I feel certain every bereaved parent will find more than one trait they can relate to.

Behavior

- When the phone rings after dark I get very nervous and scared expecting more bad news
- I have trouble relaxing and am restless
- I find no contentment
- I don't care much about anything
- I exist in a state of confusion and my thoughts are clouded as if in a fog
- I see sadness and tragedy everywhere
- I easily lose tolerance and become impatient with others
- I frequently visit the cemetery
- I can't visit the cemetery
- I perform tasks and activities my child use to do
- I can't perform tasks and activities my child use to do
- I volunteer to benefit others
- My personal activities and social life have abruptly changed
- Pictures are too hard to look at
- I love to look at pictures of my child and other bereaved parent's children
- Music is too hard to listen to
- Pictures combined with music are extremely painful emotionally
- My personal taste in literature music and film is different
- I am highly sensitive to words and their definitions, especially hurtful words phrases and platitudes
- I can't stand for people to talk to me and say hurtful things
- I can't stand for people not to talk to me.
- I talk to my child and ask for advice even more than when she was alive
- I have a hard time answering basic questions like how many children do you have
- It is difficult for me to describe today's experiences or activities without mentioning my child's name
- I listen to other bereaved parents describe their children and begin to feel close to them.
- I will save voice mail from any of my loved ones
- When someone tells me about their grief I don't say "I could never handle that" like I used to
- My emotions are extremely sensitive, I cry at the drop of a hat
- I get angry easily

- I absolutely need to find out "why" and keep wondering and asking
- I guard my child's possessions jealously

Relationships

- I tend to avoid old acquaintances
- Old acquaintances tend to avoid me
- My old friends avoid me
- Others including family feel awkward around me
- I discovered new friends
- I distance myself from loved ones
- Loved ones distance themselves from me

Thinking

- I defined a new sense of what is important
- I always wonder what bad experience to going to happen next
- I am more aware that death is real
- I have no fear of death
- I am aware of all loss of life and feel the pain when any child dies, even if I don't know him
- I know that life can change in a moment in a way you never considered
- I see all children differently
- I am jealous of other families that have their entire family
- I have a stronger faith
- I have difficulty and disagreement with my old faith
- I have reinterpreted issues and beliefs of faith
- I believe in a spirit world or different dimension and our children give us signs
- I am always afraid for my surviving children and may tend to be overprotective
- I feel stronger after my child died
- I feel weaker after my child died
- I never know what will bring back my thoughts of my child
- I tend to focus on the reason for my child's death
- I feel guilt about not doing more for my child.
- I can see my child's face on strangers, in a crowd, on TV, anywhere
- I feel the constant need to fill the void left since my child died.

As a bereaved parent, our way of life, thinking, behaving, and relating takes a major shift. "Normal" living is now different. My normal world may be different than your normal world, but one thing we have in common is that our previous way of living has been changed forever.

Tears may soothe the wound they cannot heal.

Thomas Paine

A Sibling's Perspective

Sometimes

Sometimes something clicks
and with a tear, remembrance of the pain
and the loneliness flood the heart.

Sometimes something clicks
and with a smile, remembrance of the love
and the laughter flood the senses.

And there are times when nothing clicks at all
and a voice echoes through the emptiness and
numbness never finding the person who used to fill
that space.

And sometimes
the most special times of all
a feeling ripples through your body, heart and soul
that tells you that person never left you, and he is
right there with you, through it all.

Kristen Hansen, Bereaved Sibling
TCF Nashville Newsletter Feb09

Grief Quotes:

Grief over the death of a child is the hardest work
that most of us will ever do. While we all wish for the
pain to stop, we need to remember that we grieve
intensely because we loved so intensely.

Elaine Grier, TCF Atlanta

It is unrealistic to expect the grief to ever totally go
away because the love we have for our child will
never go away. Our grief is an act of love and is
nothing for which we should be ashamed.

Elaine Grier, TCF Atlanta

"I don't want to be better, wiser, kinder for knowing
this pain. I am not grateful for these lessons. I flunk
gratitude. Bring back ignorance, I beg."

Dichotomies of Grieving by Diana deRegnier, Spirit Links, 6/18/07.

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Diana is a bereaved mother. <http://www.spiritlinksnewsletter.org>

Circles

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away.
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.

How do we bear it?

I don't know,

But the circle helps.

TCF Nashville Newsletter, Feb 2009

Unfinished Mother's

A mother is never "unfinished." No matter how brief
her time was with her child, the bond of love
between mother and child was complete. A mother's
love for her child is unending. Dreams may shatter
and circumstances may change, but a mother's love
remains strong. As a mother travels the path to
healing, it is important for her to remind herself often
that she is a mother forever. Her motherhood did not
stop when her child died.

Ed Note: From the "Unfinished Mother", author Clara Hinton,
bereaved mother and author, see website silentgrief.com,
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Ed Note: Becky, a member of Huntsville TCF began journaling in
Blog format after her son Adam, a US Marine, was killed in Iraq.
These particular entries were written two years after his death.
For additional reading see www.logginsfamily.blogspot.com

Excerpt's From My Broken Heart

The Combat Death of My Son

Friday, January 30, 2009

I am a Gold Star (GS) mother.

The one thing I prayed I would never be,
yet, here I am. Recently, on the Marine Parent's
forum, we GS parents were asked by a Blue Star
mother, "Why does a death from war feel so
different?" I tried to answer as best I could but I don't
feel like I gave a good answer. I haven't been able
to quit thinking of her question since then.

Why does it feel so different and does it
really?? I don't think it's any more painful. The death
of your child is the ultimate agony; there is nothing
more painful regardless of how our child died. We all
feel the same pain, shock, despair, longing. A parent
should never have to bury their child!! It goes
against the natural order. We bury our parents and
our children bury us!!

Maybe one difference is that you start
grieving your child before he is gone. When Adam
got orders for Iraq, I started grieving for him. I knew
what it meant to be at war. I knew the cost and I
didn't want to have to pay it! Adam knew it too but
he willingly accepted it. He talked about it, tried to
prepare me for it but I wouldn't listen. The very
thought made me feel sick. He said he had to take
his dress blues with him. I asked why in the world
would they make them take their dress blues!? I
guess ignorance truly is bliss. Now I know why they
take them.

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Note: Our Huntsville newsletters are available online at <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org/Newsletters.html>

We Remember Them

...on their Birth Dates, on their Death Dates, and always...

April	
Benjamin S.	Larnerd
Adam E.	Loggins
Dennis	Springer

May	
Peter T.	Duke
William J.	Gibbons

June	
David C	Bach
Rebecca L.	Craig
Evan	Davis
Adam E.	Loggins



I am standing on the seashore.
A ship spreads his white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the ocean. I stand watching him until he fades on the horizon, and someone at my side says,

"He is gone."

Gone where?
The loss of sight is in me, not in him.

Just at that moment when someone says, "He is gone," there are others who are watching him coming.

Other voices take up the glad shout,
"Here he comes!"

and that, is dying.

Gifts of Love and Remembrance

The following donations will help The Compassionate Friends to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Ian Scott Jerry & Sharon - Parents	In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">David Chris & Jeanne - Parents	In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Adam Danny & Becky - Parents
In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Ben Herb & Jane – Parents Nancy & Robert - Grandparents	In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Gregory Murray & Iris - Parents	In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Cory Ray & Diane – Parents Nancy & Robert – Grandparents
In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Brian Steve & Dorothy – Parents		In loving memory of <b style="color: blue;">Bryan Roger & Gaylene – Parents

Donations and Remembrance Gifts are tax deductible and may be sent to:
TCF Huntsville Area – See page 8 for mailing address

Exploring The "F" Words #2 - Fear

Ed Note: The author uses the word 'completion' frequently throughout his literature. I am troubled with the concept of completion of a relationship. However, the message is excellent.

In our last article we explored the impact that lack of forgiveness might have on our hearts, our minds, and our bodies. This month we are going to focus our emotional microscope on the possible consequences of using **FEAR** to guide our recovery from significant emotional loss.

Retained FEAR is cumulative and cumulatively negative. If the griever does not feel safe enough to communicate about their fears, then the fears themselves appear to be real and begin to define and limit the griever. In a play on that old phrase, "you are what you eat,"... "you create what you fear."

Fear is one of the most **normal** emotional responses to loss. The fear of the unknown, the fear of the unfamiliar, the fear of adapting to a dramatic change in all of our familiar habits, behaviors, and feelings.

Fear is one of the most **common** emotional responses to loss. For example, when a spouse[(or child **added text by editor**)] dies: How can I go on without them? Or, after a divorce: Where will I find another mate as wonderful, as beautiful?

Those fears are normal and natural responses to the end of long-term relationships. If acknowledged and allowed, those fears and the thoughts and feelings they generate, can be **completed** and diminish without serious aftermath. As we learn to acknowledge and complete our relationship to our fear, we can then move on to the more important task of grieving and completing the relationship that ended or changed.

But, if we have been socialized to believe fear is unnatural or bad, then we tend to bury our fears to avoid feeling judged by our fellows who seem to want us to feel better very quickly after a loss.

There is also danger in that we have been socialized to express fear indirectly as anger. While there is often some unexpressed anger attached to incomplete relationships, we usually discover that it accounts for a very small percentage of unresolved grief.

It is also important not to confuse Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's "stages of dying," which includes anger, with the totally unique responses that follow a loss.

An even larger danger looms in the fact that we develop relationships with and loyalties to our fears. We believe them as if they were real. We defend them with our lives, and to some extent it is, indeed,

our lives that we are gambling with. As we develop a fierce relationship with our fears, we lose sight of our original objective, which was to grieve and complete the relationship that has ended or changed. **It is as if we have shifted all of our energy to the fear so we do not have to deal with the painful emotions caused by the loss.**

Reminders of loved ones who have died, or relationships that have ended will often take us on a rocket ride to the PAST, where we are liable to dig up a little regret. After thinking about that regret for a while, we might rocket out to the FUTURE, where we will generate some worry or FEAR. The point is that those fears we generate, while they feel totally real, are often the result of some **out-of-the-moment** adventures. It may be helpful to remember this little phrase: "My feelings are real, but they do not necessarily represent reality."

While FEAR is often the emotional response to loss, in our society, **ISOLATION** is frequently the behavioral reaction to the fear. If isolation is the problem, then participation is a major part of the solution. Fight your way through the fear so that you will not isolate further. Recovery from significant emotional loss is not achieved alone.

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Ed Note: Next is Familiarity

(continued from page 4)

My Broken Heart, Continued

I think it might also be different because our pain is so public. I couldn't turn on the television or read a paper without seeing his picture or reading his story, our story, for weeks and weeks. Even today, almost two years later, the news media still uses his picture in stories. It's always such a shock to be sitting there and suddenly see his face. In one way it is good because people remember him. He said he didn't think anyone would care if he were killed. But in another way it's not so good.

With every military death, I relive Adam's. I mourn with their families. I know and feel what they are feeling. We were "blessed"; we got Adam back whole. We could have had an open casket but we chose not to. Parents of soldiers killed by IED's don't usually have that option. Adam was killed by a sniper. We didn't have to make the agonizing decision of whether we wanted any found remains sent home for another burial. Another thing I had no idea could happen! And has happened numerous times!

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My Broken Heart, Continued

Two more soldiers from our area were killed this month. The week the parents waited for their son's bodies to get home, I walked the floor and cried. Their bodies arriving at the airport was flashed across the television. There was no escaping it if I had the TV on. I should have turned it off.

In my thoughts I was back at the airport, waiting for Adam. My daughter said that day was when she thought she might actually die from it. It was one of our hardest days.... Now I could not deny it, I could not pretend that they had made a mistake. The media was at the airport I understand the interest and they were all very respectful, for which I am very grateful. But it's still hard. Adam is not just a story, he is our son. He is Amber and Josh's brother and friend.

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

It has been almost 2 years since Adam was killed and I still cannot say it out loud. I thought I would try to write it down. That way I don't have to actually hear the words. I don't know why I don't want to hear them. It's not like I don't believe it. I know too well the reality of it all.

When I decided to write about it, I didn't know where to start. I guess I will start on that awful day, even though the grieving for Adam started way before he died. I think it started the day he enlisted.

My husband, who had been a firefighter for over 30 years, was sworn in as the new Fire Chief on April 20, 2007. Six days later our world came crashing down. He and I were at a luncheon for a group of senior citizens who were graduating from a self-defense course. Danny was going to give out the diplomas. We were eating when Danny got a call from his office. He walked off to take the call. When he came back to me he said, "We have to go home, there are soldiers at our house". I knew at that instant. Oh my God, this cannot be happening! I jumped up and got my purse and ran to the front door. I wanted to throw up.

Danny said maybe they were there just to tell us he was injured but I knew better. They don't come to your house unless there is a death; he was dead. We were 20 miles from our house. One of the Deputy Chiefs drove us home. I rode in the backseat. All the way home I kept saying, "it's not real, it's not real, it's not real", I begged God to please not let it be real! At one point on the way home I thought about jumping out of the car. We were going at least 65 miles an hour; if I just opened the door and jumped, it would be over, and I wouldn't have to know the truth.

I looked at the door handle and seriously considered jumping but I thought about my other 2 children and I couldn't do it. Then it struck me, I didn't know which one of my sons it was! I thought it was Adam but it might have been Josh! Josh wasn't in Iraq yet but it still could have been him! Just a week before, Josh and his fellow soldiers were in a training accident. The Stryker they were in rolled over five times! Soldiers get killed in training accidents all the time! I didn't know for sure which one of my boys it was until we pulled into the driveway and I saw the Marines get out of the van.

We got out of our car. I didn't think my legs would hold me. For some strange reason, I kept squatting down, I felt like I couldn't stand up. Maybe if I got low enough to the ground I would just disappear. I wanted to die, I asked God to just let me die. They wouldn't tell us anything outside, they kept asking us if we could go inside. I'm not sure how I got up the stairs. My body felt so heavy, like someone had put sandbags on me. I felt like I could barely walk. When I got upstairs to the sofa, I sat, and then lay over on my side. It all felt so unreal. I just kept praying I would wake up. I don't remember the words that were spoken; I knew from the look on their faces what they were there to tell me.

My son was dead. Killed 26 April ... at 10:30am Iraqi time. It would have been 1:30am our time. Shot by a sniper. His death wasn't instant; he knew he had been shot. I have never asked what he said. I try not to think about that. I'm afraid to know but sometimes I do wonder; was he scared? Was he in pain? Was he thinking of us? Who was with him? Was he by himself? Maybe one day I will be able to ask these questions but for now, I can't. I'm afraid, I'm afraid of the answers.

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

Two years ago today, I was tying yellow ribbon number three around the tree in front of my house [*months on deployment—Ed*]. Next month would be number four; there would not be a number five. I don't remember when I took them down but I do remember doing it. I had the scissors in my hand and a sudden urge to stab the tree. I had to fight the urge; I wanted to stab it over and over and over again. But I didn't. I cut the ribbons off and cried. I wanted to put black ribbons on every tree in my yard but I didn't do that either. I just cried.

Adam's mom – Becky



"Semper Fi"

Calendar of Events

2009

April	April 19 – The Ask it Basket
May	May 17 – Family Relationships, How They Were Affected After my Child Died
June	June 21 – Annual Balloon Launch; Slides of past TCF Conferences
July	July – “Firsts” During First Year and After

TCF Huntsville meetings are held at 2:00PM on the third Sunday of each month at:
Renasant Bank (Community Room)
4245 Balmoral Dr (off Airport Rd)
Huntsville, AL 35801

Official TCF Huntsville Mailing Address

TCF Huntsville Area
C/O H. Larnerd
7801 Chadwell Dr. SW
Huntsville, AL 35802

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321

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