



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

I hope that everyone has survived the holidays and all of those snowy, dreary cold days so far this winter. I know that I am looking forward to seeing the sunshine and feeling those warmer temperatures.

On December 12th, the Huntsville Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends and Hospice Family Care observed the 2010 Worldwide Candle Light Program at Mayfair Church of Christ. It was a very touching and memorable time spent with thousands of others around the world remembering our children.

We warmly invite you to come and join us at next month's meeting at 2:00 pm on February 20 when we will all have an opportunity to ask anything you want regarding the journey through grief in the "Ask it Basket". You can write down your question(s) and put them in the basket to be randomly selected for discussion. This is always an interesting and helpful time for sharing and getting perspective on those things that you might not otherwise ask.

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REMINDER:

**Join Us At Our Next TCF Meeting:
Feb 20, 2-4 pm, Renasant Bank
Topic: "Ask It Basket"**

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 or 256-325-8296

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..... Gaylene
(256) 325-8296 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:

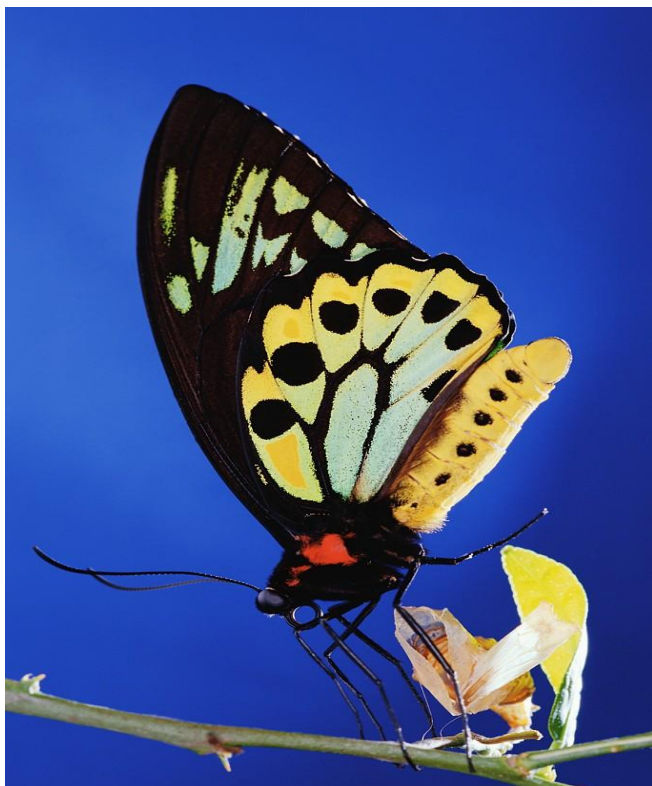
Hospice Family Care HOPE..... Huntsville
(256) 650-1212
TCF National Office ... (877) 969-0010
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

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In January our Chapter Leader, Herb Larnerd, and co-Leader, Ray Woodson, announced that they will be stepping down effective April 2011. Herb has been our Chapter TCF Leader since its inception in 2007 and we appreciate what he, Ray and Jane have done over the past 4 years to charter, organize and plan all the local TCF Chapter meetings and activities. It was many, many hours of hard work that I'm sure was a labor of love and a way to help others in the club that no-one wants to belong to. Roger and Suzanne (Gaylene) Eidsaune have agreed to assume the role of leadership to our Chapter and we are excited to be able to welcome their service. Each of us needs to offer support and be willing to provide assistance whenever possible. Herb will now be able to concentrate more on his role as the Regional TCF Chapter Coordinator. He, Jane and Ray will continue to attend our meetings and provide their invaluable help.

The TCF National Conference is scheduled to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 15-17, 2011. They are now taking hotel reservations. Information is available through the TCF e-Newsletter/website. Please consider attending as you will find it very informative and richly rewarding in many ways. It is a place where friendship, hope and understanding are shared by over a thousand other grieving parents, grandparents and siblings.



Poetry and Prose

The Storm of Grief

It comes like a huge thunderbolt – shocking and deafening you to all else around you. Suddenly the world that has been so bright is black and desolate. There seems to be no hope.

The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come, and you are torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.

Most passersby can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it – and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special ones – the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived.

After a time, the torrential rains turn to slow showers, and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain but they become more bearable.

Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow – a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will be enjoyed. I don't think the showers will ever end, but I believe as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer; we will see more rainbows; and the flowers will bloom more and more.

Perhaps it is even good to have a shower now and then – to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

*Mary Jo Pierce, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL
March 2005*



Rainbow Microsoft Clip Art

...From the Heart



...a compassionate friend speaks

"...From the Heart", is a regular feature that will give a local member the opportunity to share a tip, suggestion, or experience of what has helped or hurt in his personal grief journey.

I think it must be a myth what people say about mothers forgetting pain of labor and childbirth. How could anyone forget? In an instant I can summon up the labor pains in the final stages. Just as I can summon up the excruciating pain of grief in its beginning stages.

An entry in my journal dated May 26th, one day after Lindsay died, tells of my reaction upon seeing our 13 month old daughter. "I just don't understand! The mere sight of Melissa is enough to make me swell with tears and indescribable pain. What's wrong with me? Why do I feel such resentment? Is it because her sweet face so closely resembles the baby's? Does her delightfulness in life remind me of the profound finality of death? Am I simply afraid to let myself love her for fear of losing her someday too?"

This was the beginning of grief, the season of confusion over my own reactions and expectations. I expected the pain to magically disappear when I first held Melissa, but it didn't. I expected it to be similar to grieving the death of my father, but it wasn't. I expected my life to go on as if nothing so traumatic had happened, but I couldn't. And most especially, I didn't expect the pain and yearning to last so long!

I didn't know it was humanly possible to survive such consuming pain for such a long period of time. I didn't know the shock was going to last into months before I could even begin to deal with the reality of what had happened. I didn't know being stalked by anxiety, fears, suspicions, outrage, regrets, remorse, jealousy, delusions, and a little bit of madness were all characteristics of mourning the death of a child.

What I needed was a loving someone who could take my hand and gently assure me: "Okay. This is normal. I remember when I felt like that, but I don't feel that way anymore."

So, to you newly bereaved, I would offer hope. There was a time when I thought I would never again walk this earth with joy. But now, even though I still recall the harrowing pain of early grief, I am among those who can say, "I don't feel that way anymore..."

What helped most was an honest outpouring of the anguish with loving friends who truly understood the many confusing emotions without being judgmental or critical. We learned that years may pass before we can come to any form of acceptance, and that's okay! It's okay, too to go a little "crazy" again on special days like Christmas, birthdays, Mother's or Father's Day and the anniversary of death. It's really not so bizarre. We are mourning the denial of all special days we imagined when our children were first conceived, and mourning the fact that we have an unwanted remembrance day – a day we never dreamed we would have to observe – the death day of our precious children.

Grieving the death of a child is the most agonizing condition of life. The pain of bringing them into the world is barely a whisper compared to the labor of "letting them go". Making the necessary adjustments seem next to impossible, and in some ways, we probably never adjust completely. But time, once again, plays the master here – there will come a gradual diminishing of the pain, or at the very least, we learn more creative ways of coping with our own grief in any given situation.

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks is building a new relationship with our children. We want to remember them with love instead of the overpowering pain of grief, and in our own time, in our own way, we can. We will come to the point where thinking about them doesn't rip us apart anymore. It may be impossible to believe that right now, (it's probably something you don't even care to hear) but it can happen.

"Hope" can be found in many places. But one of the most important for me was the friendship of other parents who have traveled this same tunnel of grief and made it to the light. The ability to so vividly recall the harrowing months of beginning grief is what enables them to reach so compassionately back into that tunnel, take someone else's hand and gently reassure them: "Okay. This is normal. I remember when I used to feel like that, but I don't feel that way anymore..."

Right now, my friend, I pray for your peace.

Dana Gensler, TCF Rockfield, KY
Montgomery Area Chapter Newsletter, May 2010





Frangipani flowers from the Microsoft public clip art

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friends who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.

~ Henry Nouwen

A Sibling Perspective...

Ask Dr. Paulson-February 2011

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family that loves them, appears in the quarterly TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

Q. My 23-year-old son has been having troubling nightmares about his sister who died of suicide three years ago. He relives her death, or dreams she is angry and trying to hurt or terrify him. They had the usual sibling arguments but nothing unusual. He has trouble sleeping now which is greatly affecting his work. What can he do to stop the nightmares?

A. Our bodies are amazing. Sleep not only rejuvenates us for the next day, but it is during our sleep that we work out some of our toughest issues, relive memories or live out pleasant fantasies. Dreams are the mind's way of wrestling with difficulties, anxiety, and trauma. Dreams help us sort through the day's stressors. How many of you have had a dream in which you solved a math problem for school?

The sudden shock of a sibling's death may provoke many types of dreams. You may dream of your own death or imagine your sibling returning to life and dying again. Years after a loss, you may dream of doing fun activities with your brother or sister. It's the mind's way of saying the relationship is still important and intact even though your sibling has died. Sometimes more painful dreams can emerge if there is a lot of anger surrounding the death or if violence was involved. In these cases, it's best if you are prepared ahead of time for their occurrence and plan to take an active role in your dreams. You can actually change your dreams into something more positive as they are happening.

It is very important for you to not allow the dreams to overtake you to the point you are not sleeping enough. Exhaustion will interfere with your daily responsibilities and prevent you from doing the hard work of grieving. If this is happening, then it is best to consult a professional. With time (and perhaps some effort) your dreams should become more pleasant—good memories from the past or pleasant dreams about your brother or sister still actively sharing your life.

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, TCF E-Newsletter, Feb 2011

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

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Birthdays and anniversaries are difficult for bereaved parents, but as long as we live, our children shall also live for they are a part of us in our memories. The children listed below are lovingly remembered and we send our love and support to their families:

January	
Sandy	Chance
Paul J.	McKinney
Paul J.	McKinney
Zach	Guidry

February	
Rebecca L.	Craig
Ricky	Rousseau

March	
Brian	Dunham
Benjamin S.	Larnerd
Daniel J.	Rhoades
Evan G	Riddle
Ricky	Rousseau

Remembering...

Spring is not far away –
There is a smell of growing things about.
The snow looks somehow
even more perishable now.

Spring is not far away –
and memories move to another place.
Remembering: A squeaky swing in the garden,
going back and forth...

Remembering: a bicycle taken out for its first ride...
Remembering: incredibly wet boots, cold hands, kissing-fresh face...

So many things remembered.
How many lost?
Not one, not one.
The heart remembers always.

Spring is not far away. ***The Poems of Sascha Wagner, 2008***

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 Ben Larnerd Herb and Jane - Parents Nancy and Robert - Grandparents	In loving memory of Cory Woodson Nancy and Robert - Grandparents	In loving memory of April Warren Page Murray and Iris – Parents
In loving memory of Daniel Rhoades Larry and Bambi - Parents	In loving memory of Brian Dunham Steve and Dorothea - Parents	In loving memory of Bryan Eidsaune Roger and Gaylene – Parents
In loving memory of Paul McKinney Tom and Sandra - Parents	In loving memory of Emily Dover Clark Joe and Leeta – Parents	In loving memory of Jason McKinney Tom and Sandra – Parents
In loving memory of Aubrey Livingston Matthew and Christina – Parents Anne - Grandmother		In loving memory of Anastasia Stefadouros George and Becky - Parents

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

February	February 20 – “Ask it Basket”
March	March 20 – Cliches
April	April 17 – “What’s Bothering Me?”
May	May 15 – To be scheduled

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We do understand.

TO OUR OLD MEMBERS:

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick.

TCF is here to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you.

TCF Huntsville meetings are held at 2:00PM on the third Sunday of each month except December 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
 5617 Woodridge St. SW
 Huntsville, AL 35802

TCF Huntsville 2010
 Candle Light

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address

Street Number and Name

City, State 98765-4321

This Newsletter is published by the Huntsville Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org.