

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

Previously we looked at the words “Forgive and Fear” from the series *Exploring the F Words* by the Grief Recovery Institute. As promised in this issue we explore the final chapter of the F word – familiarity. Additionally, we will look at a list our TCF Huntsville members created titled “Ways We Cope With Grief”.

Our feature article is by the Reverend Al Miles. Reverend Miles is an ordained minister and serves as the chaplain at The Queen’s Medical Center in Honolulu, HI. He has traveled the country and is renowned for his research of domestic violence. One article that caught my eye reminded me of part of our TCF credo that deals with faith; how some struggle with their faith and how some turn to faith after the death of their child. In this issue, Rev Miles has given us permission to reprint his article *Anger at GOD after a Child Dies*. Regardless of your current opinion on faith, I think we can all glean something from Rev. Miles words

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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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**Butterfly House
Huntsville, AL**

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The steering committee wants to encourage our members to participate at the **TCF conference in Portland, OR. August 7-9, 2009.** We have decided 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. It is not too late to register if you are interested.

I had high hopes that TCF Huntsville together with The Circle of Hope could begin the process of establishing a children's memorial garden in Huntsville. Unfortunately, the obstacles and obligations from the city and national TCF are near impossible to conquer. As an alternative, the national office suggests that we purchase a bench, plaque, or tree to place in an existing garden. Possibilities include; the Botanical Garden, the new Rotary Park being built downtown, and the existing Children's Park downtown. Please let me know your opinion and the committee will meet to address your suggestions

When you have a web site and publish names on it, those names eventually can be "googled" (searched for) by others trying to find out information about you. That is how I found Rev. Miles. My name frequents both our TCF web site and a local football web site. A dear friend of mine from middle school days "googled" my name and found me after 45+ years of not communicating with each other. Her name is Liz. Liz is an accomplished photographer (much better than me) and she loves butterflies and purple flowers. She has graciously allowed me to use some of her personal collection in our newsletters. Thanks Liz.

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.

SCHOOL'S OUT

That time of year again,
when children move
from classroom to reality.

And deeper even than before
your heart recalls the child
who left this life
to move from here
to ultimate reality.

Give blessing to that journey,
when you can.

SUMMER WIND

The one who owns the summer is not here,
not here to know the tender summerwind,
not here to share the glowing and the song.
The one who owns this summer day did not live,
not live to touch the richness of this day,
this day in summer when you are alone.
Weep to the summerwind, weep and love again
the one you remember.

ANGER

Grief often brings us a feeling of desperate anger.

But let us try to remember that much of our anger
is only a reflection of helplessness in the face of
death.

Yet that anger must be acknowledged – anger
denied is an enemy of healing.

WISH

I wish gentle days and quiet nights.
I wish you memories to keep you strong.

I wish you time to smile and time for song.

And then I wish you friends to give you love,
when you are hurt and lost and life is blind.

I wish you friends and love and peace of mind.

"When he went, the power and glory of a three
year old presidency went with
him..."

*President Coolidge
About the death of his 16 year old son*

Ways We Cope With Grief

During the March 2009 monthly meeting, TCF Huntsville discussed coping with grief – what worked and what didn't. The methods below should not be considered advice or recipes for success; they are only a list of our experiences. Some of these methods were more destructive than helpful yet they are all real life possibilities. As always, we all grieve differently and there is no correct or incorrect method.

- Spending time and energy gardening.
- Joining a gym or club and exercising.
- Attending bereavement support groups
- Avoiding our child's friends and places we took them to.
- Returning to work so as not to be alone at home.
- Working at the job or at home with an extreme focus.
- Volunteering excessively
- Shopping
- Singing joyful songs
- Drinking - then withdrawal
- Inpatient, outpatient, and private therapy
- Journaling by keeping a diary or private record.
- Journaling using electronic tools that can may provide a response to your statement like blogs and email.
- Journaling my dreams of my child
- Writing poetry, essays, or short stories.
- Going for walks and hiking on trails and hills
- Taking long road trips in the car.
- Listening to audio books while traveling
- Continuing to talk and have conversations about my child.
- Breaking and smashing things like old dishes, clay pots, and guitars for anger
- Screaming for anger
- Playing a guitar or other musical instrument
- Participating in both competitive and leisure sports like throwing darts and bowling
- Living in the moment and not thinking about the future
- Painting
- Visiting the cemetery
- Reading
- Reading with an insatiable interest for bereavement literature
- Listening, performing, or composing music
- Taking photographs, especially of butterflies
- Generating home DVDs with pictures of my child and music I like.
- Coordinating or attending candle light services in memory of our children
- Avoiding all discussion about my child.

- Wearing items of remembrance such as bereavement pins, military ID-tags, remembrance or memorial bracelets, butterfly and broken heart necklaces and others.

I'm certain there are other traits that can be added to our list. My way of grieving is most likely different than your way of grieving, yet one way or another we will grieve the death of our child. - Herb



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.

To understand the 'state' of bereavement presupposes that we understand the nature of death. Indeed, if we are to be of any real help to the bereaved, not only must we explore the presence of death in our midst, but, most important, we must come to terms with our own dying.

*Rev. Simon Stephens
Founder TCF, Coventry England*

Pain passes but beauty remains.

Renor, French Artist

People will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou

In this universe nothing is ever wholly lost. That which is excellent remains forever a part of this universe. Human hearts are dust. But the love which moves the human heart, abides to bless the last generation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

ANGER AT GOD AFTER A CHILD DIES

By The Reverend Al Miles

Many people who suffer the death of a child find themselves feeling angry at God. This anger is sometimes expressed directly: "I'm angry at God for allowing my child to die."

Most often, however, the anger reveals itself in less direct phrases such as, "Why would a loving God allow my child to die?" "Doesn't God have any mercy?" "Where was God when my child experienced so much suffering?" "With all the horrible abuse being done to children by some adults, why did God take the child of loving parents?"

It is important to understand that anger is a normal, healthy part of grief. While not all parents who suffer the death of a child feel angry at God, most will feel this way at someone or something over the long process of grief. The best support we can provide to these individuals is to listen in silence. This will allow them to work through the anger in their own time frame.

Michelle remembers the intense anger she felt at God when her daughter, Robin, died a year after being diagnosed with leukemia. "The depth of my feelings surprised and concerned me," she recalls. "I thought I was losing my mind. Although God was the chief target of my anger, I was also angry at my family, friends and strangers I'd see at the mall with their children. Even the weather affected my mood. When it rained I was angry, and the same was true when the sun shone brightly. And most of my energy was directed at God."

Michelle's anger gradually subsided. She attributes this to the permission she received from her minister to express her feelings during their many pastoral counseling sessions. "Reverend Johnson told me that God could take my anger and still love me as His child," she remembers. "This was very important for me to hear. Many other people tried to defend God saying that He didn't cause Robin's death. I know they meant well, but I didn't find their efforts helpful at all."

Recently I spoke to a group of hospital chaplains at a medical center in the Los Angeles area. The subject addressed was death and dying. At the beginning of the workshop I showed a videotape of a woman grieving the death of a loved one. The woman said that she was angry at God for allowing her loved one to suffer with cancer for nearly two years before dying.

GRIEVING PEOPLE DON'T NEED THEIR FEELINGS ABOUT GOD STIFLED OR REDIRECTED. GOD CAN HANDLE THE ANGER OF HUMANS WITHOUT OUR DEFENSE OR JUSTIFICATION. ANGER IS A NORMAL, HEALTHY PART OF THE GRIEF PROCESS.

At the conclusion of the video I asked the chaplains how they were going to care for the grief-stricken woman. Several of them replied that their first agenda was to get the woman's "anger off of God." When I asked why they felt this was necessary one chaplain replied, "Because God didn't cause her loved one to suffer."

I then asked the group if they thought that God could handle the anger of one hurting woman—whether or not God caused the suffering? They all agreed that God could.

Mona knows the pain of not only having a child die, but also being told that her anger at God was wrong. Her first child, Jason, died shortly after being born. "When Jason died," she recalls, "I asked God where was His mercy? It had taken my husband, Tim, and me more than two years to conceive. It didn't make any sense that God would allow our child to die. I was definitely angry at Him."

Mona says that many people tried to shift her anger away from God. This was especially the case with her and Tim's minister.

"The first thing my Pastor said," she remembers, "wasn't, 'I'm sorry for your loss,' or some other compassionate words. Instead, he said, 'Mona, God's not to blame. Remember He, too, suffered the death of a child. We simply live in a world where tragedies occur.'"

Mona did not find his words helpful. "I know Pastor was well-meaning," she said. "But he seemed to be more concerned with defending God than caring for Tim and me. Although I continued to be angry at God, I no longer expressed my feelings out loud. Pastor seemed to imply that my anger was misguided or wrong."

Grieving people don't need their feelings about God stifled or redirected. God can handle the anger of humans without our defense or justification. Anger is a normal, healthy part of the grief process. Given the permission to be expressed, it will eventually help bring about healing and a renewed sense of wholeness.

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Ed note: Rev. Miles is an ordained minister serving as the chaplain, Queen's Medical Center, Honolulu, HI

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...

July	
Ian Scott	Campbell
Alan	Hilliard
Jason M.	McKinney
Jason M.	McKinney
Evan G	Riddle
Dennis	Springer

August	
David C	Bach
Bryan J.	Eidsaune
Gregory L.	McKinney
April A	Warren Page
Cory	Woodson

September	
Nathan A.	Day
Bryan J.	Eidsaune
Daniel J.	Rhoades



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.

<p style="text-align: center;">In loving memory of April Warren Page Murray & Iris - Parents</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In loving memory of David Bach Christopher & Jeanne - Parents</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In loving memory of Bryan Eidsaune Roger & Gaylene – Parents</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">In loving memory of Ben Larnerd Herb & Jane – Parents Nancy & Robert - Grandparents</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">In loving memory of Cory Woodson Nancy & Robert – Grandparents</p>

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 #3 – Familiarity

by Russell Friedman & John W. James of
The Grief Recovery Institute

***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. Bold text by the authors.*

What you practice is what you get good at!

[The Grief Recovery Handbook](#) makes constant reference to the fact that you must **grieve and complete** your relationship to your **pain**. Lacking Grief Recovery skills, griever often begin to identify themselves by the pain they have experienced. In a relatively short time, the griever becomes familiar with that pained identity. The griever may also develop a very strong loyalty to the now familiar pain. No one wants to give up things they own or feel very familiar with.

What you practice is what you get good at!

In a society that does not encourage or support effective grief recovery actions, it is typical for griever to find themselves **isolating** from friends, family and co-workers. In an attempt to escape the very real sense of being judged or criticized for having the normal feelings caused by loss, the griever may begin to avoid all people or events that might lead to having to defend their feelings or to act as if they were recovered. The griever becomes very familiar with and loyal to the **isolation** that seems to protect them.

What you practice is what you get good at!

We have been taught, incorrectly, that griever want and need to be alone. We have been taught, incorrectly, that griever do not want to talk about the losses they have experienced. The griever, caught between the treatment they receive from well intentioned friends and their own fears, begins to become very familiar with being alone.

What you practice is what you get good at!

So far we have identified Pain, Isolation, and Loneliness as highly probable areas of familiarity for grieving people. It is tragic when a griever, already struggling with the normal and natural emotions caused by loss, is further limited by some habits that do not enhance or encourage **completion** and **recovery** from significant emotional loss.

Familiar is not necessarily good, it is only familiar. Comfortable is not necessarily good, it is often just familiar. The old cliché, "better the devil I know than the devil I don't know," almost explains our loyalty to the familiarity of Pain, Isolation and Loneliness. Change can be difficult and awkward at the best of times, and it is clearly difficult for grieving people for whom the whole universe may seem upside down.

It is essential that we begin to become familiar with actions, skills and behaviors that will lead to successful recovery from significant emotional losses. It does not require any more energy to practice helpful things than unhelpful ones. [The Grief Recovery Handbook](#) is an excellent source of appropriate and effective Grief Recovery tools that can lead to completion of familiar behaviors or beliefs that are not helping us improve our lives. In a prior article of this series we said, "Familiarity can create a powerful illusion that change is not necessary, that growth is not possible." You must fight off the illusion of comfort caused by familiarity. It is not your nature to live a life of Pain, Isolation and Loneliness. It is your nature to be loving and lovable, trusting and trustable. Practicing the principles of grief recovery will help you become familiar with your natural ability to be happy.

What you practice is what you get good at!

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A Siblings Perspective Everything is a First

Every thing is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, and the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me....NEVER!

The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality.

Forget? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere – love and concern were translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say – nothing is NORMAL.

Tragedy has brought a seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the

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Siblings Perspective, Continued

unimportance of a lot of things I previously found important keep circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be: tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I'm learning to deal with all of this.

People ask me "How are you"? Here is my answer. "I am mad Dave died at age 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I hope things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be STRONG."

Lisa Anne Jones, TCF Avoca, PA

Loss of an Infant

THE GRIEF OF A PARENT WHO HAS LOST AN INFANT

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should that child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to the parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

1. Shame and guilt. Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

2. No memories. Parents may only have "souvenirs of an occasion" (birth certificate, ID bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

3. Loneliness in grief. It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is a newborn they may give the

impression that you are grieving unnecessarily over a non-person. They hope that you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

4. Neglected father. Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby too.

5. Mothers vs. fathers. Since the mother has bonded with her child all during pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

~ By Claire McGahey and Sue Shelley
TCF, St. Louis, Missouri

HIS ROOM

I walk past it a hundred times a day,
Sometimes pausing at the door;
It hurts to look inside,
It's not his room anymore.

We folded his clothes and put them away,
The closets are all bare;
Our little boy is dead you see,
Only memories are there....

The wallpaper's stripped, the furniture's gone,
The room is empty now;
I know that life does go on,
So please tell me how.

The room is just an empty space,
Four walls and a door;
I cry as I step inside,
It's not his room anymore.

By: Tom Wyatt Bereaved Father, St. Louis, MO
from A JOURNEY TOGETHER, website of the BP/USA,
www.bereavedparentsusa.org.



Calendar of Events

2009

July	July 19 – “Firsts” During First Year and After
August	<p>August 7-9 – TCF National Conference, Portland, OR</p> <p>August 9 – Walk to Remember Portland, Or</p> <p>August 16 – Guilt: Would’ve, Could’ve, Shoul’ve</p>
September	September 20 – Memory Triggers
October	October 18 – Handling the Holiday Season

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

People ask me “How are you”? Here is my answer. “I am mad Dave died at age 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I hope things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be STRONG.”



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 Huntsville, AL 35802

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 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.