



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

North Oklahoma City Chapter

November 2020

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The cut-off date for the next newsletter is the 15th of the prior month

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Upcoming Events

Do to the COVID 19 pandemic, our chapter has elected to NOT meet in person for the time being.

We are offering a chapter meeting via a video application called ZOOM. With zoom you can participate in the meeting on your phone, laptop, or desktop computer.

**The meeting ID is 884 5185 0603
the pass code is 753819**

You may log in as early as 7:15pm and the meeting will start at 7:30pm

We have a special guest speaker for November meeting.

Marla Cole Mercer is a licensed professional counselor and grief support group facilitator. Marla has shared her wisdom with us before and we are looking forward to hearing her again in November through our Zoom meeting.

Our Virtual WorldWide Candle Lighting will be 12/13. You can log in as early as 5:30 PM.

Meeting starts at 6 P.M. through 8 P.M.

Meeting ID 886 1806 7218 passcode 629509



Sibling Corner... Dedicated to our Brothers and Sisters

SIBLINGS

"Hey Joyce, where 'ya been?" my classmate casually asks. He doesn't realize that simple question is the most difficult for mw to answer, "My brother died." At twenty-five years old, Raymond overdosed on drugs. I look away.

Can you tell how I feel by the look on my face? Can I tell you with words? Would you listen? I'm nineteen years old. I Get to live- how come he didn't? Look at all he is missing - do I have the right to enjoy all this - concerts, dancing, a walk in the park- LIFE! Do I have a right to smile when he isn't here? Was there something I could have done to help him? I'm angry! I suppose I shouldn't be. After all, he was so sad and so sick. How can I be mad at someone who died?

The rest of my family speaks of him as if he was a saint, yet I am filled with rage. How could you destroy our family? How could you be so selfish? I hate you! I feel ashamed to say these words, but I can't bear walking around like I am choking. The tears come out sharply, and yes, it hurts, but the clenched fist in my heart is beginning to open. I pray that I will not be bitter. I will try to go on because I love life, and I know God wants me to live.

Seventeen years later, I enter Compassionate Friends where I can tell my story without shame- uncensored. I have come to realize I was powerless over my brother's addiction. I will always feel the sadness of this loss, but I have the right to a full and joyous life even though my brother didn't survive. And so I am grateful to experience the meaning of the word -
compassion.

Joyce Raimondo, *TCF Manhattan*

It's the Music that Bonds the Soul

The room you once lived in
Doesn't look the same.
The people who used to call you
Never mention your name.

The car you used to drive
They may not make anymore;
And all the things you treasured
Are boxed behind closed doors.

The clothes you set the trends by
Are surely out of date.
The people you owe money to
Have wiped away the slate.

Things have changed and changed
Since you went away,
But some things remain the same
Each and every day.

Like the aching in my heart –
A scar that just won't heal.
Or the way a special song
Can change the way I feel.

Brother, you must know that the music
Bonds us and will keep us close;
Because secretly I know in my heart
It's the music you miss the most.

So let the world keep turning,
Time can take its toll.
As long as the music is playing
You'll be dancing on my soul.

Stacie Gilliam
TCF, N. Oklahoma City, OK

“Giving Thanks to Grief”

Holidays can be especially hard for us grieving parents and siblings. The impending dooms of holidays are often worse than the actual holiday itself, but we still can't help the dread. In all months of the year, when I'm unraveling in my grief, I stop and practice gratitude. No matter how difficult it can be in that moment, I still make the time to be grateful. Part of this is honoring and giving thanks to my grief. That may sound and seem odd to someone, but I believe it's important in healing. Grieving the loss of my daughter has been instrumental in strengthening the core of my person, my inner self. By allowing myself to feel all of the scary and overwhelming emotions associated with her death, I have begun to heal. It has shown itself in the way the grief has changed over time. The triggers that were almost too intense to bear, now are there, I sit with them, appreciate them, and then, they move along. I am grateful to my loss in that way.

The other day, I went to an appointment at Mercy hospital. Going to Mercy is always doomsday for me. This is where she was born, where I was hospitalized and where she almost lost her life. The smells, the views, the scrubs, the nametags, the wall color, all mean something to me. The appointment I had was very long, very painful and very overwhelming for a multitude of reasons. However, I met a nurse who was asking me a lot of random, inquisitive questions. This resulted in us both revealing to each other how we had lost children. I lost a child who was only a year and a half; she had lost a son, 33 years of age. No matter how long you had your child here on earth with you, no time is long enough. We will always grieve our child, the wonders surrounding their life and all of the what ifs. We talked about how, in addition to being a part of this special club, we are now forever changed. We feel forever stuck in a looming shadow of not knowing if we are changed for the better or worse, and simply making life more manageable while teetering back and forth on invisible barbed wire of loss. We talked about how we are almost angry at the world for not being as grateful for the little things, for the milliseconds we have with one another as we, bereaved parents are grateful. I find gratitude for the sunlight, for the morning coffee, for the earth and the sky and everything in between. Most importantly, I am grateful for time in a whole new way. The time I get to share with those I love...every single second. These years, on Thanksgiving, and really, any day where the doom is striking you down, practice gratitude. Whether it's a quiet internal conversation with yourself, a conversation over hot cocoa with a friend, in your journal or night time prayers, ask yourself: What is the new gratitude my child has given me? What do I appreciate more since they've been gone? Be proud of yourself for having the courage to ask these questions. Allow your heart's deep planted seeds of grief to be watered and nurtured so that in time, in the spring (or whenever it is right) those seeds begin to bloom, and you become new.

Kelly Sibley

TCF – North OKC Chapter

Hurrying Healing

I don't remember when the words first began to echo in the hollow aftermath of loss. But now it seems that every public or private death, every moment of mourning is followed by a call for "healing," a cry for "closure."

Last month, driving home in my car just 24 hours after three Kentucky students were shot to death in a school prayer meeting, I heard a Paducah minister talk about "healing." The three teenagers had yet to be buried, and he said it was time to begin the healing process, as if there were an antibiotic to be applied at the first sign of pain among the survivors.

Weeks later, at a Christmas party, a man offered up a worried sigh about a widowed mutual friend. "It's been two years," he said, "and she still hasn't achieved closure." The words pegged her as an underachiever who failed the required course in Mourning 201, who wouldn't graduate with her grief class.

This vocabulary of "healing" and "closure" has spread across the postmortem landscape like a nail across my blackboard. It comes with an intonation of sympathy but an accent of Impatience. It suggests after all, that death is something to be dealt with, that loss is something to get over – according to a prescribed emotional timetable.

It happened again when the Terry Nichols verdict came down. No sooner had the mixed counts of guilty and innocent been announced, than the usually jargon free Peter Jennings asked how it would help the "healing" for Oklahoma City. Assorted commentators and reporters asked the families whether they felt a sense of "closure."

The implicit expectation, even demand, was that the survivors of 168 deaths would traverse a similar emotional terrain and come to the finish line at the same designated time. Were two-and-a-half years too long to mourn a child blown up in a building?

It was the families themselves who set us straight with responses as persona and diverse as one young mother who said, "It's time to move on," and another who described her heart this way: "Sometimes I feel like it's bleeding."

In the Nichols sentencing trial last week, we got another rare sampling of raw grief. Laura Kennedy testified that in the wake of her son's death in 1995, "I have an emptiness inside of me that's there all the time." Diane Leonard said that since her husband's death her life "has a huge hole that can't be mended."

By the second day, however, the cameras had turned away, the microphones had turned a deaf ear, as if they had heard enough keening. Again, observers asked what effect a life-or-death sentence would have on, of course, "healing" and "closure."

I do not mean to suggest that the people who testified were "typical" mourners or the Oklahoma bombing a "typical" way of death. I mean to suggest that grief is always atypical – as individual as the death and the mourner.

The American way of dealing with it however has turned grieving into a set process with rules, stages, and of course deadlines. We have, in essence, tried to make a science of grief, to tuck messy emotions under neat clinical labels – like "survivor guilt" or "detachment."

Sometimes, we confuse sadness with depression, replace comfort with Prozac. We expect, maybe insist upon an end to grief. Trauma, pain, detachment, acceptance in a year – time's up.

But in real lives, grief is a train that doesn't run on anyone else's schedule. Jimmie Holland at New York's Sloan-Kettering Hospital, who has studied the subject, knows that "normal grief may often be an ongoing lifelong process." Indeed, she says, "The expectation of healing becomes an added burden. We create a sense of failure. We hear people say, 'I can't seem to reach closure; I'm not doing it fast enough.'"

Surely it is our own anxiety in the presence of pain, our own fear of loss and death that makes us wish away another's grief or hide our own. But in every life, losses will accumulate like stones in a backpack. We will all be caught at times between remembrance and resilience.

So whatever our national passion for emotional efficiency, for quality-time parents and one-minute managers, there simply are no one-minute mourners. Hearts heal faster from surgery than from loss. And when the center of someone's life has been blown out like the core of a building, is it any wonder if it takes so long even to find a door to close?

Ellen Goodman

This column appeared originally in the January 4, 1998 issue of The Boston Globe. Ellen Goodman is a Globe columnist. © Copyright 1998 Globe Newspaper Company.

OUR CHILDREN *Loved...*

Missed... Remembered...

As long as we live, our children too shall live, for they are part of us in our memories.

We lovingly remember the following children on Their Anniversary.

November Birthdays

- 1 LEE BRUNER
- 2 CAMERON WILLIT
- 3 MATTHEW PATRICK LeBEAU
- 3 RYAN FIACCONE
- 4 SCOTT RUSSELL REAMS
- 4 STAN EVANS
- 5 LANDEN SIRAN
- 6 SANJEET ASHOK-NALDU (KANNAN)
- 7 HANNAH DAY MORRIS (STEVENS)
- 7 KYLE NICKEL (CREECH)
- 11 JT TURNER (WARNOCK)
- 14 AUSTIN WAYNE GOVIA (VANDENBURG)
- 15 SHEILA BROWN
- 16 DENNIS ADAIR FARROW (LAUSON)
- 17 JEREMY DEWAYNE HARVEY
- 17 JONATHAN PATRICK BRAGG
- 17 SETH RYAN HUNTER
- 18 MADISON WATTS
- 19 JIMMY HEFNER
- 21 KAREN ELAINE SHEFFIELD
- 22 DERRICK EUGENE KILLIAN (HARRISON)
- 22 JAMIE STARR MURRAY (BROTHER)
- 22 KELVIN DOUGLAS OWEN
- 25 RITA KAY GWINN
- 26 JUSTIN HERRELL
- 26 NATHAN COLON
- 29 JOHN MINER (HUGHES)
- 30 GREGORY "ISSAC" COVEY



November Angelverseries

- 1 JETT STARK
- 2 KEITH RYAN ORR
- 4 JEREMY DEWAYNE HARVEY
- 5 AMANDA FAITH LIGHTY
- 6 BARBIE SUE GOODMAN
- 7 LARISA RHINEHART (CONSTANCE)
- 7 SHELL DAWN TATE-SAPP (THRIFT)
- 8 CHARLIE WERTZ
- 9 RICHARD ALLEN CANADY (EUBANKS)
- 10 DANZRO DEMETRIUS ROBINSON (LOMO)
- 10 JASON OWEN
- 15 MEGAN LYNEE WHITE
- 16 JENNA RAYE WINN
- 16 JOLEE BRITT WHITE
- 17 TIM MCLAUCHLIN (CARPENTER)
- 18 RAYMOND L. JOYNER
- 19 KENT CASTLEBERRY
- 19 KEVIN BLAKELY
- 21 MARK COCHRAN
- 26 JAMES PRIDEAUX
- 26 ZACHARY TAYS
- 27 NORMAN BRADFORD GEORGE RENO
- 28 BRYCE MUSICK
- 30 DAISLEY PALMER (CHELSEA)
- 30 ROBERT ANTHONY BURKE (WALKER)

People in mourning have to come to grips with death before they can live again.

Mourning can go on for years and years.

It doesn't end after a year, that's a false fantasy.

It usually ends when people realize that they can live again, that they can concentrate their energies on their lives as a whole, and not on their hurt, and guilt and pain.

~Elisabeth Kubler-Ross



Love Gifts...A thoughtful way to remember our precious children.

A *Love Gift* is given to The Compassionate Friends in

honor of someone who has died...or a memorial to a relative or friend...or simply from those who wish to help.

Because TCF is a non-profit organization, *Love Gifts* are an important means of financial support, which enable us to continue to reach out and support bereaved families. **We are so very grateful for the *Love Gifts* listed below. Thank you for caring**



When someone you love becomes a memory ,the memory becomes a treasure.

Randall & Charlotte Orr," In memory of our son, Keith Ryan Orr 7/3/73- 11/2/2001

Grief never ends...

But it changes.

It's a passage,

Not a place to stay.

Grief is not

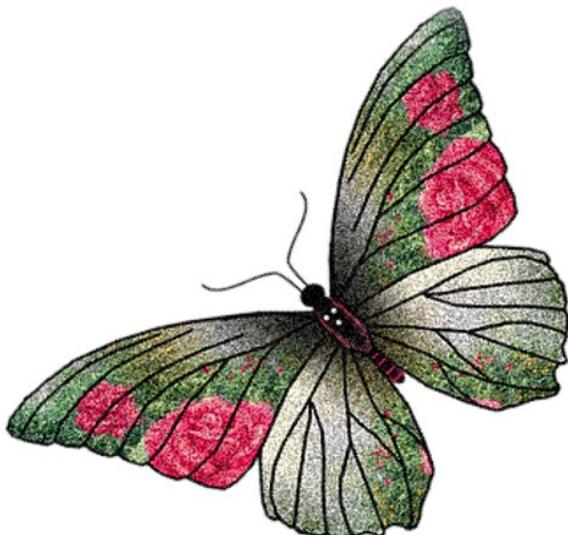
A sign of weakness,

nor a lack of faith....

It is the price of Love.

Randall & Charlotte Orr

-selected-



THERE IS NO WORD

They call a man a widower
when he has lost his wife.

The woman is a widow
when her man does lose his life.
And orphan is the word perhaps
for most of us one day.

For it is normal losing
Mom and Dad along the way.
But you can look both high and low
and then look far and wide
and never find a word for one
who's had a child who died.

So is it then so rare a find for
lexicography?
And, like some unfound jungle plant,
there's yet no word for me?

Or could it be a word that's just
too difficult to choose?
And God forbid, a nightmare curse
too horrible to use?

So, at a loss to tell our loss,
we call ourselves bereaved.
For there's no word to tell of pain
that cannot be believed.

-Ken Falk, TCF Northwestern CT

Sometimes when grief overwhelms us it is comforting to know that someone who cares is just a phone call away. A Loving Listener is someone who is willing to talk on the phone with another bereaved Parent, Sibling or Grandparent. A Loving Listener's phone number will be published in the newsletter as another resource to our bereavement community. Names will be listed along with special circumstances, such as auto accident, illness, suicide or homicide.

If you are willing to be a Loving Listener please let me know and I will add you to the newsletter. Contact Gary Clark at gary.clark@cox.net.

Loving Listeners

Gary Clark: Skiing Accident 405-691-7144

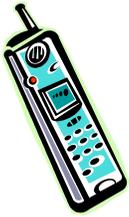
Melinda Heidling: Infant Death 405-885-2739

Sharon Ellington: Drunk Driver 405-721-6939

Robi Long: Unknown 405-408-2102

Kelly Sibley: infant death, special needs child 405-962-8968

Janet Turley: Suicide, adult child 405-413-9797



***** PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING *****

We all want to help when we can. It is a BIG part of our healing process. Being helpful, productive people is key. Our chapter very much needs to strengthen our steering committee. The Steering committee meets once every other month, and perhaps once or twice a year for special projects, such as the Walk to Remember and the December Candle Lighting.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS, YOUR CREATIVITY, YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS.

WE NEED YOUR INDIVIDUAL TALENTS.

Our chapter has been operating with just a few volunteers for sometime now and we have not been able to do the Outreach to the community and Public Awareness that was once our strength. We know there are so many hurting families in our community who have not heard of us.

We can all probably help a little, which will help our chapter a lot. If you can help please contact Sharon Ellington at 405-721-6939 , or Gary Clark at 405-691-7144, or come to our next meeting and talk to us. We will be very happy to have your help.



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. ©2007

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NORTH OKLAHOMA CITY CHAPTER

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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**NOVEMBER
2020**

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity 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.