Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn’t it, that it’s especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, “Are we there yet?” Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there’s nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children’s absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children’s absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don’t wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don’t hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.

Sascha Wagner

We Need Not Walk Alone

Graduation Time

It’s June and graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring “Pomp and Circumstance.” Now there is a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you are strange?

As always you must follow your heart. So, go if you’d like to and don’t hide your tears. It’s quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others.

Just remember: That your instincts are the most important ones; that no one else can make this decision for you, and that it doesn’t really matter what other people think.

It was your child who died. This is your pain and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way—and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

Peggy Gibson, TCF Nashville, TN
How Dad Copes

It will be four years on May 31 this year since our son Nicholas passed away. Wow. I never imagined in a million years this would happen to us. It is difficult to deal with the aching pain I still feel in my heart. Nicholas's friends are getting married and having children. Though we are happy for them, our sadness deepens with the thought of how different it could be if he were still here.

The anxiety that begins to build in the latter part of April in preparation for the anniversary of Nicholas's passing gets stronger and stronger as the day comes near.

Past years were shock years. I couldn't figure out how to deal with it all. I would listen to other parents that are further along in their grief for coping strategies, but it did not seem to help. How could anyone help me heal my heart after it was broken into a trillion pieces?

I have found that speaking about Nicholas to friends, family, and new acquaintances helps me tremendously. At first it was difficult to do because it does make some people uncomfortable. The more I do it, the easier it gets, and the better I feel. Talking about my son has been like a pressure relief valve for me.

I also make time to think about Nicholas and release my emotions. This time alone to reflect and weep brings overwhelming, though temporary, relief. Dads tend to hold back tears and feelings. We like to think we can maintain control. My advice is don’t try. Instead, let your feelings go in private at a time and place of your choosing.

Thinking back to the beginning of this tragic event in our lives, I should have sought counseling from a grief therapist. My wife and I both should have done this. I truly believe this would have helped us develop better coping skills. At that time I didn’t think private counseling would help. I was wrong.

Finally, The Compassionate Friends (TCF) volunteers are available to us all. TCF volunteers understand your loss and the dual problem of “maintaining control” for the sake of our family. Our chapter newsletter lists names and telephone numbers of other fathers and mothers ready and willing to assist us. I am one of the parents who volunteers to talk with grieving fathers. I have even become active in the administrative aspects of our chapter. Now, I tell parents, “we sincerely regret the circumstance that has brought you to this group.” This is a club none of us dreamed we would ever join. I thank TCF for helping my family and me and for allowing me to help others.

Albert Tapia
TCF Katy Chapter
In Memory of my son, Nicholas Albert

MEN DO CRY

I heard quite often “men don’t cry”
Though no one ever told me why
So when I fell and skinned a knee
No one came to comfort me.
And when some bully boy at school
Would pull a prank so mean or cruel
I’d quickly learn to turn and quip
“It doesn’t hurt” and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years
I learned to stifle any tears.
Though “Be a big boy” it began
Quite soon I learned to “Be a man.”

And I could play that stoic role
While storm and tempest wracked my soul.
No pain nor setback could there be
Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby
And helplessly watched my son die
And quickly found to my surprise
That all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame
I cannot play that “big boy” game.
And openly without remorse
I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can’t abide
A man you’ve seen who’s often cried
Reach out to him with all your heart
As one whose life’s been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see
Their loss of immortality.
And tears will come in endless streams
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

Ken Falk
TCF NW Connecticut Chapter
Pity Party

I feel that every day I engage in a battle with my very own personal adversary. It plagues me and pursues me relentlessly. It has many tricks. It’s a master at the “sneak attack.” My adversary’s name is Self-Pity.

I know the mistakes I’m making in this daily battle. I am supposed to ask “Why not me?” instead of “Why me?” I’m supposed to focus on the things and people I have and not on what I have lost. But there’s a significant gap between knowing in my head what I’m supposed to do and actually being able to do it.

My most effective defense against it is to focus on people who are enduring a similar loss; I hold them in my heart and mind. I am grateful that because of The Compassionate Friends, they have names and faces and are real to me. I also try to remember those who inspire me by the way they endure different challenges, such as serious illness or financial misfortunes. However, this perspective takes effort and energy. Energy is in short supply for me.

I try not to give in to it, my Self-Pity beast.

It’s hard when my son’s friends and classmates are graduating from college and have photos of their celebrations all over Facebook (note to self: it is not a good idea to look at Facebook).

I don’t understand why it’s called a “pity party.” It sure doesn’t feel like a party. It feels like a war.

Peggi Johnson
TCF Arlington, VA

Grandparents Remembrance:

Death leaves a heartache
no one can heal,
Love leaves a memory
no one can steal. ~
Found on a headstone in Ireland

Choosing Hope

Robert Frost once wrote, “You have freedom when you’re easy in your harness.” I believe I read that in junior high school. It had no real meaning to me at that time. But many years and many tears later, I have come to realize what Frost was referencing.

Soon I will be marking the seventh anniversary of the death of my only child, Todd Mennen. Seven years seems, perhaps to some, a milestone. But it’s not really. There are no “milestones” on this journey of grief after the death of our children. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child’s side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX

In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen
The mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

The passage of time alone does not cause our grief to end, but its softening touch helps us to survive ~

Wayne Loder

Upcoming Webinars

May 22, 2013, 8:00 PM Eastern Time 5:00 PM Pacific --
Coping with the Aftermath of Suicide - Presenters: Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen

The Compassionate Friends provides its webinars free of charge as a service to the bereaved. If you have questions about the webinars please email us at: webinars@compassionatefriends.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

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.

TCF, Inc. 2007

© 2012 Chapter Name All rights reserved
Johnson County Information

Our Children & Siblings, Loved & Remembered

Births

July 1st  Vincent Boos, son of John & Rochelle Boos
July 29th  Sgt. Chad Allen O'Leary, brother of Mary Jackson

Deaths

May 1st  Danny Poore, son of Deb & Darryl Poore
May 20th  Steven Burns, son of Brenda & Steve Burns
May 30th  William Drieling, son of Beth Pribil Drieling
June 22nd  Keith McFadden, son of Buddy & Debbie McFadden
June 26th  Nicole Cleaver, daughter of George and Barbara Chandler
June 26th  Douglas Morgan, son of Pam & Mike Zobkiw
July 14th  Alex Talbott, grandson of Mark & Lori Talbott
July 20th  Tori Jade Peavler, daughter of Susan & Tim Peavler
July 27th  Patrick Spaulding, son of Yvonne & Scott Spaulding

Upcoming Schedule

Gay is trying to work out a time for Kris Munsch to speak. Will keep you updated.
May 11th  Jack Polson Bike Ride to benefit American Cancer Society www.jackandcokebikeride.org
May 13th  Speaker Dennis Apple "Struggling to Regain my Faith"
June 10th  Regular Group Meeting
June 29th  Keith McFadden Memorial Golf Tournament. www.kmangolf.com
July 8th  Regular Group Meeting
July 13th  Thor Rodenbaugh Golf Tournament @ Dub's Dread

TCF National Convention, July 5-7th, 2013
Boston, MA
Check the national website for details.