

November 2005



Upcoming Meetings

November 16, 2005

December 21, 2005

January 25, 2006

February 22, 2006

Check us out on the web @

www.tcfsiouxcity.org

Meeting Place and Time...

The Sioux City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the fourth Wednesday Jan.-Oct., **third Wednesday Nov. & Dec.** at Mercy Medical Center in the Leiter room on 1st floor off the parking ramp on 5th street at 7:00 p.m.

This Newsletter format is not the same that is mailed/emailed out. Some items have been removed to protect the privacy of our compassionate friends...

If you would like to receive the full version, please send an email request to:

newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

Reminder: This month's meeting is one week earlier than usual. Meeting for this month is November 16th at 7:00pm

Sioux City Chapter Co-Leaders

Trudy Klaver

Peggy Pohlen

leader@tcfsiouxcity.org

Newsletter Editor

Melissa Munsen

newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

Lending Librarians

Kathy Sieger

Denice Christoffel

library@tcfsiouxcity.org

For technical questions or suggestions concerning our website, please contact:

webmaster@tcfsiouxcity.org

Secretary - Mary Lander

Treasurer - Stan Yates

Regional Coordinator

Barbara Lorimor

The ABC's of Holiday Grieving

By Brenda Zahnley

Director of Bereavement Services

Learn simple, practical suggestions
for coping through the holidays
following the death of a loved one.

Sunday, November 20th
2:00 p.m.

Christy-Smith
Family Resource Center,
1819 Morningside Ave.
Sioux City, Iowa
(712) 276-7319

*RSVP is appreciated as
seating may be limited.*



Thank you to **Mercy Medical Center**
for graciously printing our newsletters and providing us a meeting place.

Remembering our November Children...

*Birth and Heaven dates are
not listed to protect
the privacy of our
Compassionate Friends...*



Remember

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart.

—Frederick Buechner, *Whistling in the Dark*

A Love Gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends for the purpose of running the Sioux City Chapter. It is usually given in memory of a child who died, however may also be from individuals who want to honor a friend or relative. It may be in thanksgiving that their children are alive and well, or simply a gift of support for the work of TCF. Others in the community make contributions because they want to help us with the newsletter, meeting costs, or maintaining a good lending library. *The simple truth is that without your support, there would be little possibility for this group to exist.* All gifts are welcome and truly appreciated. Time is also a wonderful gift, there are many jobs that must be done, and volunteers are always needed.

*Thank
You
for the
love gifts in
remembrance
of your
children...*

Love
never
dies

Sioux City Chapter Love Gift Form

Parent(s) Name _____

Child's Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Birthdate(s) _____ Remembrance date(s) _____

Tax-deductible donations that pay for the newsletter costs and other chapter expenses are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged in the newsletter unless you request that the gift not be published. You may make your donation in memory of your loved one and include a message.

Love Gift \$ _____ (Any Donation Amount) Please make check to The Compassionate Friends

In Memory of _____

On the occasion of _____

Message _____

To receive mailing address to send love gift, please contact:

newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

National Headquarters - P.O. Box 3696 - Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 - (877) 969-0010 toll free- www.compassionatefriends.org

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal...
L o v e leaves a memory no one can steal.

Hurricane Houses

Grievers remind me of people who live by the ocean, where they build sturdy, good-looking homes which offer most spectacular views. One can tell how their owners cherish these well-tended houses with shiny clean windows like eyes watching the beautiful, unpredictable sea.

But then, there comes a hurricane, in a matter of minutes the treasured, handsome homes are struck, broken, swept away by wind and water, covered by an avalanche of uncaring sand.

I have wondered, weren't the people afraid of another hurricane? Yes, of course, they were afraid, but there was no better place in all the world to live, and so they would stay, they would risk it all again.

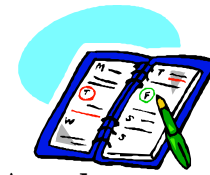
I understand those people in their hurricane houses. My life, too, has felt like a hurricane house, at times. My children died, taken one by drowning and one by suicide - leaving me broken and swept aside by a storm of tragedy, overwhelmed by loss.

Yet if someone asked me about it today, I would say that, while I was bitterly hurt and hopeless then, I see that my place in life is still the finest, because I once had my children. I have learned to accept the lonely beach. I built another house, and now a changed "me" lives there in those rooms filled with welcome feelings and cherished memories.

I think that a veteran-griever will know what I mean, while "Hurricane House" may seem impossible for most newly bereaved parents. Perhaps we will all understand next year.... or the year after that. There is no hurry.

To honor the legacy of times remembered, to find a new view of life, and for the sake of those who survived with us, many of us have decided to stay on the dangerous beach and to restore our hurricane house with its shiny clean windows like eyes watching the beautiful, unpredictable sea.

— Sascha, from *Wintersun*



November Agenda

by Trudy Klaver

On November 16, 2005, we plan to meet and discuss how to cope with the approaching holidays. We anticipate watching part of a DVD entitled, "Handling the Holidays," featuring Darci Sims. The holidays are often a very difficult time, and the newly bereaved often find themselves dreading the idea of having to face them without their deceased loved one. Sharing our feelings, concerns, thoughts, and our common anxieties about the upcoming holidays often helps. It is also helpful to listen to "seasoned" grievors, who have already had to face each of those "firsts." Their creative ideas and past experiences about how to cope are often very helpful. Please join us.



Birthday Table

Thanks to Christy Glissman, we will now have a *Birthday Table* at our local TCF meetings. This table is for you. If you would like to share your child's favorite cake, or anything that will help you "remember" their birthday with others who are open to "celebrating" with you, please take this opportunity to share with us. You may take decorations that meant something to your child, or helps you remember that special day. You may take a picture(s) of your child's past birthdays, etc. If your child has a birthday before or after our monthly meeting, just know that you are welcome to do whatever you would like to do. If you bring a special snack or drink, plan on at least 25 people, give or take a few either way. The success of the Birthday Table depends on you.



*When we have done all
the work we were sent to do,
we are allowed to shed our bodies,
which imprisons our soul
like a cocoon encloses the butterfly
and when the time is right
we can let go of it.
Then we will be free of pain,
free of fears and free of worries--
free as a beautiful butterfly
returning home to God....*

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

September Meeting Minutes

by Trudy Klaver

It was a good evening! About 25 members/guests met on September 28 to "remember" together. Our guest speaker, Marilyn Clifford spoke on "The Beauty of Memories," sharing the story of her beautiful son, Brian. Her mere presence gave us hope, as well as her encouragement to "remember" our beloved children. Thank you, Marilyn, for your willingness to openly share your story, as well as encourage us to "keep going." We appreciate your willingness to speak, listen, and encourage.

The second half of our meeting was a time when we shared mementos of our children. Some of the items shared were scrapbooks, quilts, and photos. Thanks to each of you who so willingly shared your creative ways of remembering. We closed the meeting with lunch and the song, "I Remember You," by Alan Pederson.



“MY TRIBUTE” will be **your** chance to tell us about your child who has died. It can be a short story, an amusing anecdote, or a list of treasured memories.

We will dedicate a page each newsletter and will include as many stories as room allows. They will be printed in the order they are received. The success of this feature will depend entirely upon **YOU**. We need your stories and your memories to make it a success. If you would like a photo to go with the article, please include.

Send email to newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org, please note subject as “TCF TRIBUTE” We need to receive by **November 1st** to be considered for the November newsletter. We look forward to reading and sharing about all of our children. Thank You!

Terrified Tears

The face of an Angel is all that is here,
One beautiful freckle equals one terrified tear.
Not ready to leave, but has to go,
Wants to go back, but God says no.
Leaving your life is a scary thought,
I guess it's something that can't be fought.
A Mother, a Father, sister, brothers and friends,
A meaningful life that suddenly ends.
An Angel is what she was meant to be,
Now just think of all she can see,
Looking over her family night and day.
Saying I love you in her own special way.
In the night we sleep, in the day we cry.
She watches us all from her star in the sky.

Submitted by the family of Kelly Soo



*In Loving Memory of
Kelly Soo Sybesma*



An Autumn Remembered by Trudy Klaver

Today as I watch the colored leaves fall from the trees, and the weather turning colder, my mind rewinds back to October, 1999. Our son, James, (18 at the time,) had received his stem cell transplant on August 12, only a few months prior to that day. The days and months post transplant are very crucial, therefore, he was dismissed from the hospital with the understanding that someone would stay home with him until he was past the critical time of 100 days. It was decided that I would ask for a leave of absence from my teaching assignment during James' recovery period.

That fall was a beautiful time for James and me. We spent our days walking, talking, eating healthy, and savoring the days at home in our back yard, rather than the confines of the hospital. One day is etched in my mind forever. James and I needed our daily walk, so we put on our fall jackets, and walked west of our home. The day was crisp, the sun was out, and a myriad of leaves had already fallen into large mounds of colored hills in the grass. We walked down a long stretch of the boulevard, making sure that we kicked our feet through the colored, dried, crunchy fall leaves, as if we were two small children with no cares in the entire world. Then James challenged me. (He had become rather weak from the transplant, so we often challenged each other at something like hand wrestling, etc.) This particular day he said, “I bet I can throw you into those leaves, Mom.” I replied rather nonchalantly saying, “Jamie, there is no way you have the strength to do that yet.” The words were barely out of my mouth when I was thrown into a heap of leaves, with Jamie on top of me, laughing and laughing and laughing. I guess he showed me.

Just last week, I went walking, and I found myself walking down the same boulevard, kicking those same leaves around, only 6 years later. Suddenly, unaware of what caught my breath, I stopped and remembered, thinking of that day when life was good, and I was playing with my 18 year old son in the fall leaves. “Thanks, James, for the memory.” The memory of that day causes me to smile, even as the tears roll down my cheeks. They are good tears, bittersweet tears, but with a hint of the good times.

I Would Have Loved You Anyway

If I'd have known the way that this would end,
If I'd have read the last page first,
If I'd have had the strength to walk away,
If I'd have known how this would hurt,
I would have loved you anyway.

I'd do it all the same,
Not a second I would change,
Not a touch that I would trade.
Had I known my heart would break,
I would have loved you anyway.

It's bittersweet to look back now,
At memories withered on a vine.
Just to hold you close to me
For a moment in time,
I would have loved you anyway.

I'd do it all the same,
Not a second I would change,
Not a touch that I would trade.
Had I known my heart would break
I would have loved you anyway.

Even if I'd seen it coming,
You'd still have see me running
Straight into your arms.
I would have loved you anyway.

I'd do it all the same,
Not a second I would change,
Not a touch that I would trade.
Had I known my heart would break
I would have loved you anyway.

__author unknown

There is a tremendous wisdom that is accumulated in one's encounter with grief, and it needs to be shared. Healing takes place when we turn our pain into a positive experience and we realize that helping others is the key to helping ourselves. When that happens, our problems don't look so big. We expand on newfound strengths and we discover that as one door closed, many others have opened.

The road to recover from grief, therefore, is to take time to do things which will enable us to give meaning to our lives. That's when our journey through grief becomes a journey of discovering ourselves, our potential and our resources in the encounter with life. That's when we become BETTER people, rather than BITTER people. In grief, no one can take away our pain because no one can take away our love. This call to life is to learn to love again.

__Father Arnaldo Pangrazzi



Will My Grieving Ever Get Easier?

By Rob Anderson

Should I still feel so bad, should I still cry so often? I see other parents smiling, why can't I? I thought if I did my grief work, it was supposed to get easier.

Grieving is hard work. Expectations of ourselves, and those that others place on us, can confuse and make us think we should be in a certain place at a certain time with our grief. Sometimes we hear, "Your child died five years ago, aren't you over it yet?" Or, "It's been a long time, why are you still crying?" Those comments hurt and push us away. Early in my grief, I read the following which helped me understand that I was fine where I was on my journey: Wherever you are in your grief is exactly where you should be. To that I would add; as long as you're not abusing yourself or others, and not living in chronic grief.

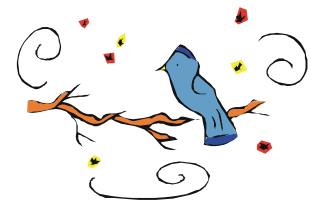
If you don't want to go to a birthday party because you feel horrible, that's fine. If you don't want to go out to dinner because you're having a bad day, that's fine. If you want to stay home all day and go through pictures of your loved one, that's fine. Most of what we do is fine, regardless of what others may think or want.

Just as there is no consistency to the grieving process and the pattern is often unrecognizable, so is our healing sometimes hard to see. We are told about the stages of grief and how we can pass through them towards healing in a logical, controlled manner. What we find is that often B doesn't follow A, or C follow B. Our goal has a way of taking us places beyond reason and down an irrational path. Grieving is often times out of our control and we get dragged along. One day will be good, the next horrible. One minute we laugh, the next we cry. In the early stages of grieving, we feel our lives have been thrown into a blender, the switch on high as we spin and spin trying to slow down the chaos.

For our lives to get better, we need to believe that no one can tell us how we should grieve, or how long we should be doing it. Others don't understand our pain and we can't expect them to. Our first, and most important obligation is to ourselves, to our healing. Others may want us to hide our grief so they'll feel better. Only we know what is best, and that is what we must do, regardless of what others may want. Don't try to get them back, let them go and wish them well. If we grieve to please others, we will only make our lives more miserable.

So, how do we get about feeling better? How do we start the process of healing? It is important to give ourselves time to heal and to acknowledge that we will forever grieve the death of our loved ones. We will never be "over it" as some may want or expect. As much as we want our pain to end, it will never completely leave us. Acknowledging that we will forever live with some of our pain can help us get comfortable with our grief. We learn how to live with it and blend it into our new normal. A grieving and healing life will not be an easy life. It can still be very good, but not like it was. Many challenges will block our healing and the path back to our smiles.

We are on a solitary journey in our new grieving and healing lives. Within each of us is where we will find the strength to go on. Follow your heart, do what is best for you, regardless of what others may want. You will be doing what you need to reconnect with the special and beautiful life of your loved one, and your grieving will get "easier."



Because We Are What We Are

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Jesus in Matthew 5:4, NIV).

Have you ever felt in the pits when a well-meaning friend told you that you shouldn't feel that way? It makes you feel worse, right? Whether we should or shouldn't feel what we feel is beside the point. We feel what we feel because we are what we are.

Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They just are. It's what we do with them that count. And, contrary to what many of us were taught, feelings are important. They are a God-given vital part of our humanity.

In one sense, feelings are an "emotional thermometer." They tell us what's going on inside of us, what our emotional temperature is and, when interpreted correctly, can indicate when we are emotionally well or if there is some issue in our life we need to resolve.

When feelings are repressed, one's "thermometer" is out of order. It's a very unhealthy path to follow. You don't even know when you are sick (emotionally and/or spiritually). Furthermore, people whose feelings are repressed may be clever but can at the same time be very cold, calculating, insensitive, callous, and even murderous.

Feelings can be trusted. What we can't always trust is our interpretation of them. That's the difficult part, but with help it can be learned and learn it we must if we are to be emotionally, spiritually and physically healthy.

Learn to listen to your emotions. Take time to write a daily journal. Record what you are feeling without any kind of self-judgment. David did a lot of this in the Psalms. Get into a support, recovery or therapy group where it is safe to express your feelings and get them out into the open where they can be accepted and examined. If emotions are deeply buried, chances are you will need a capable therapist to help you work through and resolve the barriers in your life that are blocking out your feelings.

Be aware, too, that the emotions we fail to talk out creatively, we will inevitably act out in one way or another destructively. Also remember that Jesus never told us how to feel or not how to feel, only how to act.

Suggested prayer: "Dear God, help me to get in touch with all of my emotions, both positive and negative and learn how to express them creatively in a healthy manner so that I will become an honest and real person as David was. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer. Gratefully, in Jesus' name, Amen."

Email Friends

Melissa Munsen newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

Twins- 32 day old daughter, premature
5 ½ year old son, multiple medical conditions

Trudy Klaver leader@tcfsiouxcity.org

23 year old son died from leukemia

*Friends are quiet angels who
lift us to our feet when our
wings have trouble
remembering how to fly.*

___Author Unknown

*Feel no guilt in laughter,
For he knows how much you care.
Feel no sorrow in a smile
That he's not there to share.*

*You cannot grieve forever...
He would not want you to.
He'd hope that you would carry on
The way you always do.*

*So talk about the good times
And the ways you showed you cared,
The days you spent together,
All the happiness you shared.*

*Let memories surround you;
A word someone may say
Will suddenly recapture
A time, an hour, a day*

*That brings him back as clearly
As though he were still here,
And fills you with the feelings
That he is always near.*

*For if you keep those moments,
You will never be apart,
And he will live forever...
Locked safe within your heart.*

___author unknown



Symphony



by Dana Gensler, South Central, KY

When I was a young musician, my dad liked to tease me by playing the notes of the C-Major scale: “DO-RE-MI-FA-SO-LA-TI...” then he would stop, step back and wait for my reaction. No matter where I was, my response was certain. It would drive me absolutely crazy until I rushed to the piano and played the final note that would make the scale complete.

I feel much the same way about Lindsay at times. Fives years ago we opened the pages of a manuscript and began what appeared to be a very interesting overture in our lives. We didn't just open a book, we were the composers and she was our composition. The love and promises grew within me, along with a multitude of ideas and plans we had for the way things would be. We were shaping the future - ours, the baby's and the world's.

We had only concluded the prelude when the book suddenly and abruptly closed with the clashing of cymbals, just as tightly as the lid on her tiny white casket. There was a supreme silence in her death, but our hearts thundered on as the pounding of tympani drums. I could plead, I could cry, but I could not change what happened. I tried to bargain with God. I tried to deny it. I tried to run from it. For awhile, I tried to pretend it didn't hurt. Our lives were overshadowed by an ominous quality - life was uncertain, death was not. We could not escape it. No matter how hard I tried to understand, it was far beyond my comprehension. I chased my “elusive dream” in circles, around and around, until I was utterly exhausted from the effort.

I am her mother, and yet her life seemed so incomplete, without purpose or accomplishment. It was my responsibility to mold and shape her life, and I thought I had been denied that privilege until I talked with my bereaved friends. I discovered we can open the pages of our book again. We are still her parents, and she can still make a difference in someone's life - but only if we allow ourselves to let her. Only I can write the notes that complete her life. And I know now the last note will never be written until we hold her in our arms again. (Then it will sing forever!)

I thought the symphony was over, that the pomp and circumstances of her life had been stilled, but that is not true. It is playing, yet in a different way than we ever dreamed or originally planned. The melody becomes more beautiful each time we touch another person with love and understanding, and that feels very comforting to us. I believe she would approve.



*They whom we love and lose
are no longer where they were before.
They are now...
Where ever we are.
~ Saint John Chrysostom ~*



Web Sites of Interest

Sioux City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

www.tcfsiouxcity.org

TCF E-Newsletter - TCF National Web Site

www.compassionatefriends.org

Adult Sibling Grief – offers a chat room, message board and resources for adult siblings www.adultsiblinggrief.com

MISS Mothers in Sympathy and Support

www.missfoundation.org

Bereavement Magazine - www.bereavementmag.com

Centering Corporation & Grief Digest journaling site -

<http://www.i-remember.org>

Amanda the Panda Children & Family Grief Center

www.AmandaThePanda.org

Child miscarriage and child death support

www.silentgrief.com

Centering Corporation - <http://www.centering.org>

Website just for teens - <http://www.fireinmyheart.com>

Alan Pedersen - www.everashleymusic.com

The Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Center

www.elisabethkublerross.com/index.html

All grievors, regardless of the circumstances or details of their loved one's death, have three rights:

To find words to wrap around their grief.

To say the words aloud.

To know that their words have been heard.

—Excerpt found in *Griefkeepers* by Harold Ivan Smith

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause. There is no religious affiliation. No individual membership fees or dues are charged, and all bereaved family members are welcome.

All items published in the TCF Sioux City Newsletter are the personal reflections of the writer. All content is subject to editing. TCF Sioux City reserves the right to not publish any article due to content and space limitations. Thank you for understanding.