



**The  
Compassionate  
Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When you are thinking about starting to attend Chapter meetings of The Compassionate Friends, you probably will have many questions. Remember that you'll be among people who understand.

### **How do I know if it's too soon after my child's death to attend?**

No one can say with certainty when is the right time to come to a meeting. Sometimes family members come shortly after the child has died while other times they wait longer. Some people who attend shortly after the child's death may decide not to come back until they're more ready. This is a personal decision.

### **Do I need a reservation before I come to a meeting?**

No reservations are needed. Just come whenever you feel up to it.

### **If I go to a meeting, will I have to talk?**

No one is required to talk at any meeting. We understand how difficult that can be when our grief is so fresh. We do ask that you listen, however.

### **Is there a charge to attend?**

There is never a charge to attend a TCF meeting. Our chapters rely on voluntary donations from members, friends, and the community at large.

### **My child was an adult and didn't live at home. Can I still go to a meeting?**

Chapter meetings are open to all families that have experienced the death of a child, at any age, from any cause. Regardless of our child's age, we in TCF believe our children will always be thought of as just that . . . our children.

### **My spouse won't come with me. Can I come alone?**

Yes. We all grieve differently and your spouse or significant other may not be ready to take part just yet . . . or ever.

### **Can I bring a friend with me the first time for support?**

Of course, you can bring a friend, but we ask that they, as well as all members, respect each other's privacy. It is important for us to be able to share freely within our group and be sure confidences will be respected.

### **Do men attend meetings?**

Yes. Many chapters are divided almost evenly between men and women while others are not. Men grieve, too, and are welcome to attend meetings for support.

### **What happens at a meeting?**

Some meetings we simply introduce ourselves and share our thoughts and feelings. At other times, chapters have short programs before or after the sharing time. The programs may include a brief guest speaker, viewing a video tape, or listening to an audio tape or CD. Chapters usually have special months when they hold a balloon launch or have a memorial candle lighting.

**My child died from \_\_\_\_\_. Will I still be welcome?**

Yes. All families that have experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause, are welcome.

**Religion doesn't matter to me anymore. Can people at a meeting accept that?**

The Compassionate Friends has no religious affiliation. You will find TCF members are very tolerant of any views. After the death of a child, many priorities, as well as values, change.

**I notice the meeting is in a church. Do I have to belong to a church to attend?**

While TCF has no religious affiliation, chapter meetings are held in a wide variety of locations depending upon what is available in our communities.

**I have babysitting problems. Would it be all right to bring my five-year-old with me?**

While we understand the difficulties of finding child care, we must ask that any children attending with you be old enough to understand the meeting discussions and not be upset by them. Some chapters have sibling groups for children twelve or older; check with your local chapter.

**My child died seven years ago, and I postponed my grief work. Now it's catching up with me. Is it too late to come now?**

We all grieve differently. Many parents don't feel the need for a support group until years after the death of a child. It's all right to come whenever you are ready, whether it's soon after your child's death, months later, or years later.

**How long do people come to meetings?**

People attend meetings until they no longer feel a need. Some attend just a few meetings while others come for years. Some are so thankful for the helpful support they've received that they stay to help in chapter leadership so they can be there for the next persons who walk through the doors seeking help.

**Why is it that TCF recommends that I attend three meetings before deciding if it's for me?**

Often, the first meeting brings a lot of emotions to the surface and this may make the first meeting difficult. Some say that they bring home the pain of others after listening to their stories. Attending three meetings gives you time enough to allow your emotions to even out and to understand that in sharing there is healing.

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