

~continued from page 4

the funds, checked us in, operated the gift shop, served the coffee and did the myriad behind-the-scenes jobs, large and small, that we who attend little notice but take full advantage of.

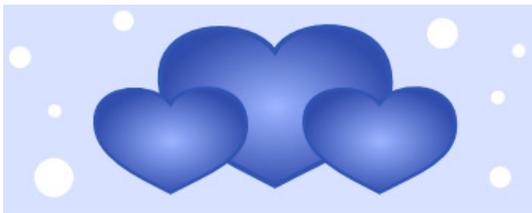
There are grizzled veterans of the, fifteen, twenty conferences who ask only one question – “How can I help?”

There are many reasons for coming as there were attendees. But ultimately the overarching reason is stated in our credo. Our love for our children unites us. And in the end, this is *Why. We Come.*

By Richard Dew

TCF Knoxville, TN chapter leader

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The Greatest Grief

A sudden accident killed your child. That terrible phone call changed your life with no warning -- you didn't get to say good-bye -- this has to be the most terrible loss of all.

Your child died by suicide -- you feel you should have been able to prevent it. Your guilt is devastating. How can you live with such an incomprehensible tragedy?

You only had one child -- now you have none and your focus in life is gone. What's the point of living? What could be more devastating?

You've experienced the deaths of more than one of you children -- will it happen again? How does one survive this pain again?

When your baby died, your dreams died -- you have few memories and you're too young to be suffering like this -- this loss is the most unfair.

Someone murdered your child -- an unbelievable violation -- you're angry and your frustration with the legal system feeds your anger. This must be the very worst.

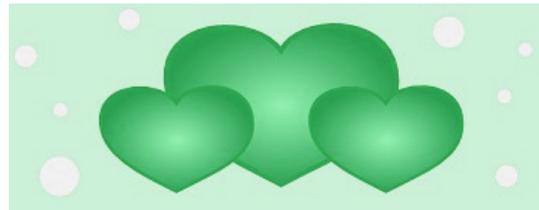
You're a single parent -- your child has died and you have no one to lean on, no one to share your grief -- surely your suffering is the most painful.

The unbelievable has happened -- your adult child died -- you had invested so much in that child -- now who's going to care for you in your old age?

You had to watch your child suffer bravely through a long illness -- you were helpless to ease his pain and to prevent his death -- how do you erase those horrible images? Yours must be the greatest grief.

The truth is that the death of any child is the greatest loss, regardless of the cause, regardless of the age. Our own experience is far more painful than we had ever previously envisioned, so how could we possibly comprehend what others have undergone? To make comparisons between our own suffering and the pain of others is an exercise in futility. It accomplishes nothing and sometimes can be hurtful to others. To say that one type of death produces a greater or deeper grief than another tends to place different values on the children who have died. Each child is worthy of 100% of our grief, each person's sorrow is 100%, and each loss is 100%, because we love each child, those still living and those who have died, with 100% of our being. I can't imagine wanting to walk in the shoes of any other bereaved parent, can you?

By Peggy Gibson, TCF Nashville TN



My Child Did Exist

I've lost a child, I hear myself say,
And the person I'm talking to just turns away.
Now why did I tell them, I don't understand.
It wasn't for sympathy or to get a helping hand.
I just want them to know I've lost something dear.
I want them to know that my child was here.
My child left something behind which no one can see.
My child made just one person into a family.
So, if I've upset you, I'm sorry as can be.
You'll have to forgive me, I could not resist.
I just want you to know that my child did exist.

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<http://www.freewebs.com/haileykaybishop/poetry.htm>