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***For the Love of Christi, Inc.***

**Don and Susan P. Cox, Founders 1987**

**2306 Hancock Drive • Austin, Texas 78756**

**[www.fortheloveofchristi.org](http://www.fortheloveofchristi.org)**

**512-467-2600**

# About Us

On October 26, 1985, a hit-and-run drunk driver killed 20 year old University of Texas student Christi Lanahan. Christi's parents, Susan and Don Cox, and their 16 year old son Sean, found little affordable support available to help them in their grief. The Cox family needed help daily, and realized there were many others who had lost loved ones who also needed help. Two years later, in October of 1987, they established *For the Love of Christi* to provide support to people coping with death and bereavement, regardless of circumstance. The organization helps people address these problems by providing a supportive environment for them to make a healthy adjustment to life after the death of a loved one.

## Mission

**Our mission is to provide love, comfort, hope, and ongoing support to those who are adjusting to life after the death of a loved one, regardless of the circumstances; and to educate the general public regarding the issues of grief and other concerns of the bereaved.**

Adjusting to the death of a loved one is one of life's most agonizing and overwhelming challenges. *For the Love of Christi* is a non-profit, non-denominational organization providing help and ongoing support to individuals and families facing this most difficult period.

For the love of your loved one, through our experiences with loss, we offer you a safe place to share your thoughts and feelings, strengths and weaknesses, and hopes for a new and stronger sense of meaning in your life.

# Survival

Survival is the first challenge. The forced adjustment caused by the loss of a loved one is the greatest crisis most will ever know.

While this alone presents an obstacle to our well-being, it is often further complicated because our society lives in open denial of death. Our society tends to look upon death as a form of failure. The result is that we are expected to suppress our grief, a natural and necessary emotion.

It is this suppression of grief that can have severe mental and physical health implications. It can even threaten our very lives.

Successfully adjusting to life after the death of a loved one requires us to somehow find a renewed sense of purpose for our lives; a purpose that helps us to simply begin living again. Sharing with those who have a similar need is often the best way to begin to accomplish this.

**“One shocking reality is that life goes on after the death of a loved one. The mail is still delivered, the sun still shines, and people can still laugh and have a good time. Nothing stops when death occurs except the heartbeat of your loved one.” ♥**

**-Susan Cox, Founder**

# Grief

There is no timetable for grief, and no two people grieve in the same way.

In many cases, “abnormal” behavior is normal. It may surface in the form of denial, depression, anger, crying spells, feelings of guilt, and helplessness or hopelessness. The “Why me?” sense of abandonment is typical.

All of this represents common experiences of grief. They also make for a great deal of work, for grief may be the hardest work we ever have to do.

There are no schools to teach us how to grieve. We never graduate or receive any diplomas. We simply learn how to live with the pain, taking one day at a time. Eventually we accept the challenge of renewing and enjoying our lives.

# Support

At the Christi Center, you will find others who understand your pain. You will learn how they are mending their hearts and their lives, and how they help themselves by helping others.

**We Help** one another with the fear we have put inside so that we all may find peace again.

**We Listen** with our hearts by reaching out to those who are hurting.

**We Work** to keep the cherished memories alive by offering unconditional love, comfort, and emotional support.

**We Give** you a feeling of belonging in a world that can seem so detached from your sense of loss.

**We Offer Hope.**

# Services

*For the Love of Christi* provides direct and indirect services to men, women and children annually in central Texas. Participants represent a cross-section of all ethnic, economic and social groups, as well as individuals with a range of disabilities. There are no dues or fees charged for our services, which include:

- ♥ Support group meetings throughout the month for all ages
- ♥ Monthly dinner meetings
- ♥ Lending library
- ♥ Grief education packets, grief training and presentations
- ♥ Workshops and retreats
- ♥ Crime victim services and educational programs
- ♥ Court accompaniment
- ♥ Annual Memorial Tree Planting and Dedication
- ♥ Annual Holiday Remembrance Service
- ♥ Memorial 5K Run/Walk

# Common Reactions in Grief

While grief is a normal response to loss, it sometimes produces different reactions, which can be alarming. Not all of these behaviors are healthy and some may need to be changed, but they are understandable and do not indicate “insanity.” You may experience:

## Possible Emotional Reactions

### *Anger*

- ♥ Angry at God and inability to take solace in your faith.
- ♥ Angry at medical personnel for not doing enough or being able to do enough to save your loved one.
- ♥ Angry at the deceased for: not taking better care of himself/herself, leaving you, not preparing better, and dying.
- ♥ Angry that no one seems to understand what you are going through.
- ♥ Angry that people expect you to “get over it” or “move on.”
- ♥ Angry that people can still laugh, that holidays are not canceled, that life goes on while you seem so alone.

### *Fear*

- ♥ Fear that you will lose others that are close to you.
- ♥ Fear of being alone, or with people.
- ♥ Fear of leaving the house, fear of staying in the house.
- ♥ Fear of sleeping in the bed.

### *Loneliness*

- ♥ Feeling a desire to be with people who did not know the deceased, thereby giving you the opportunity to share memories again.
- ♥ Feeling that loneliness and “aleness” are more than you can tolerate.

# Normal Reactions in Grief

## Possible Physical Reactions

- ♥ Unable to sleep without medication or sleeping all the time.
- ♥ Change in eating habits with significant weight gain or loss.
- ♥ More susceptible to colds, flu, other ailments.
- ♥ Noticing a decrease or increase in sex drive.

## Possible Behavioral Reactions

- ♥ Lack of motivation.
- ♥ Difficulty concentrating and/or remembering things.
- ♥ Much more irritable than usual.
- ♥ Screaming for no particular reason.
- ♥ Experiencing panic/anxiety attacks.
- ♥ Experiencing the urge to move, give everything away and/or escape.
- ♥ Turning a portion of the home into a shrine (not changing anything in the room after the death, etc.).
- ♥ Wanting to talk about the deceased, but feeling fearful of “burdening” others.
- ♥ An increased (or new) usage of alcohol, prescription drugs, or street drugs as a way to cope.
- ♥ Driving the car too fast, or unnecessary risk taking in other areas

**If in doubt about the number or intensity of your reactions, you may find it helpful to consult a professional. A referral list is available upon request.**

# Experience of Grief

Grief is a normal and natural reaction to the death of a loved one. Most of us are not prepared for the long journey of grief, which is sometimes devastating, frightening, and often lonely. We may think, do and say things that are very unlike us. There seems to be no respite, no end to the intense feelings that we experience.

The experiences of grief have been compared to enduring a fierce storm at sea. The waves are peaked and close together. Eventually the sea becomes calmer, but occasionally the storm regroups, strengthening without any warning. For several hours, days, or weeks, you may not feel grief; then grief resumes. It seems as if you are taking one step forward and two steps back. People who grieve have elements in common with others in grief and elements that are unique to them. Although grief is a widespread experience, no two people grieve alike, even within the same family. Like a fingerprint, each person's grief has characteristics all its own.

# Experience of Grief

**Grief Work** - The expression “grief work” is very true. It may be the hardest work that you will ever perform, but you can do it.

**Control** - We cannot control the feelings that arise within us. We can accept or reject them. To deny only prolongs the grief. Feelings should be recognized and faced honestly.

**Choices** - The expression of grief is essential for good emotional and physical health, even though it may be painful and difficult. There are no easy answers or short cuts, no way under, over, or around your grief. Although grief may hurt, you must go through it.

**Major Decisions** - It is strongly suggested not to make major decisions (such as moving, changing jobs, etc.) unless absolutely necessary during the early stages of grief when judgment is cloudy.

**Listener(s)** - Find someone who will listen; talking can be therapeutic.

**Grief has no Timetable** - Grief often takes much longer than anyone involved expects. It helps to take life one hour and one day at a time.

**Remember** - People have a natural inclination to recover. Eventually you'll look back and realize you weren't going crazy, you were grieving.

**Be patient with yourself, recovering from grief takes time.**

# What Do The Bereaved Want From Us?

“Please, just let me talk.” The bereaved sometimes just want to talk about the person who died, as well as their feelings and memories about what happened.

“Ask me about him/her.” Sometimes the bereaved want to be asked about their loved one. It may be appropriate to ask to see a picture of the loved one, or find out what the loved one was interested in.

“Hold me and let me cry.” The bereaved may want to cry, and may even need to cry. If appropriate, the emotional strength of a good hug can do wonders.

“Don’t be afraid of my silences.” We must allow them their grief and memories, whenever they appear. If it is in mid conversation, be ready to resume when they return to the here-and-now.

**Grant me the SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change, COURAGE to change the things I can, and WISDOM to know the difference.**

# Clichés that May be Upsetting to the Bereaved

- "It was God's will."
- "I know just how you feel."
- "It has been three weeks since he/she died. Aren't you over it yet?"
- "Be grateful that you still have your other child(ren)."
- "God picks the most beautiful flowers first."
- "We are never given more than we can handle."
- "God needs him/her more than you do."
- "He/she lived a good, full life and it was his/her time to die."
- "Call me if there is anything I can do."
- "You must be strong for your children, spouse, etc."

## What Friends and Family Can Do

### **Be Present**

The presence of a friend or family member is worth more than words.

### **Recall Happier Times**

It helps to relieve the pain to remember some of the fun times.

### **Acknowledge the Right to Grieve**

Cry with them.

### **Comfort with a Touch**

Hold a hand, give a hug.

### **Be of Service**

"I'm here to listen."

### **Keep In Touch**

Remember those who have lost loved ones by calling, visiting, sending cards, including them in activities, and by checking on them.

# Suggestions for Coping with Grief

- Keep large and important decision making to a minimum.
- Try to accept help and support when offered. Seek it out from friends, family, support groups, professionals, or religious leaders.
- Be patient and gentle with yourself because healing takes time.
- It is okay to feel depressed. Sometimes crying can make you feel better.
- If there is a time that will be especially difficult, schedule an activity that you find comforting.
- Adequate sleep and nutrition are very important to your mental health. Do what you can to be mindful of that.
- You may find it helpful to keep a journal; it can help you understand what you are feeling.
- Read; there are many helpful books on grief and loss.
- Exercise; it will help you eat and sleep well. It is also a safe way to work out anger.
- Socialize; don't feel guilty if you have a good time.
- It's okay to be angry, let it out. Hit a pillow, a punching bag, scream, etc.
- Learn something new. Rediscover old interests, activities, and friends.
- Make sure you have something to look forward to; plan something.
- Find quotes or poems that are helpful to you and post them where you can see them.
- Be good to yourself; take a hot bath, bask in the sun, see a movie.
- Do something to help others; in doing so you can often help yourself.
- Be determined to work through the grief and hold on to hope.

# Creative Ideas for Healing

- Use flowers to memorialize your loved one.
- Light a candle.
- Pass on an heirloom of your loved one.
- Volunteer your time to an organization.
- Have a picture of your loved one framed.
- Plant a tree in their honor.
- Make a quilt out of memorabilia
- Make a shadow or memory box; fill it with objects representing people's memories of your loved one.
- Collect favorite stories about your loved one; and put them into a book.
- Write or say a toast or a prayer for your loved one.
- Write a letter to your loved one.

# *For The Love of Christi*

2306 Hancock Drive • Austin, Texas 78756



## *Directions*

### *Traveling North on MoPac:*

Exit 45th St., turn right. Turn left on Bull Creek Rd. Turn right on Hancock Drive.

### *Traveling South on MoPac:*

Exit 2222, turn left. Turn right on Shoal Creek. Turn left on Hancock Drive.

### *Traveling North on I-35:*

Exit 35th Street, turn left. Turn right on Lamar Blvd. Turn left on 45th Street. Turn right on Burnet Rd. Turn left on Hancock Drive.

### *Traveling South on I-35:*

Exit Hwy. 290/2222, turn right. Continue past Lamar Blvd. to Burnet Rd., and turn left. Turn right on Hancock Drive.

## Support Group Meetings

*Please come to your first meeting 30 minutes early.*

- ♥ **Bereavement Support Groups** (*specific groups for loss of a child, loss of a spouse, teen group, men's group, and a mixed loss group*)
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month 7-9pm
  
- ♥ **Bereavement Support Group** 11am-1pm
  - Every Wednesday of the month
  
- ♥ **Crime Victims Meeting** 6:30-8pm
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month
  
- ♥ **Survivors of Suicide Group** 6:30-8:30pm
  - Every Tuesday of the month
  
- ♥ **Kids Who Kare Meeting** 6:30-8pm
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month
  
- ♥ **East Austin Group** 6:30-8pm
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month
  - Greater Mt Zion Baptist Church (corner of Chicon and 12<sup>th</sup>)  
1800 Pennsylvania Ave, Austin, TX 78702-2129
  
- ♥ **Williamson County Group** 7-9pm
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month
  - The Wesleyan at Estrella  
139 Estrella Crossing, Georgetown, TX 78628
  
- ♥ **Spanish Support Group** 6:30-8:00pm
  - 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month
  - Capital Area Mental Health Center  
2824 Real Street, Austin, TX 78722-1715
  
- ♥ **Potluck** 7-9pm
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month (call for location)

♥♥ 2306 Hancock Drive, Austin, TX 78756 ♥♥

Please call 512-467-2600 for more information

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