



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

April ~ May ~ June ~ 2023
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 24, 2023
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

“Relationships: How They Changed Since the Death of My Child” ~ Every relationship you have undergoes some changes following the death of your child. Some will be stronger. Some will weaken and may break up altogether. How has your relationship changed with 1) your spouse, 2) your surviving children, 3) your friends, 4) your co-workers or 5) other members of your family? Has the way they have reacted to your handling of your grief impacted these changes (i.e. family who doesn't want to “talk about it”; friends who avoid mentioning your child's name, etc.)?

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 22, 2023
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

“Tangible and Intangible Gifts from Our Children” - It is often much easier in our grief to focus only on the things we have lost with the death of our child, grandchild or sibling. For this meeting we will shift the focus to the many “gifts” – tangible and intangible – that our loved ones have left behind for us. How has having had them in our lives changed our perspective on life and how we live it? What lessons did they teach us that we are only now becoming aware of? Has our grief also brought us lessons in how to live a richer, more meaningful life? Let's look for and share those “gifts” and how they changed us as people.

JUNE MEETING

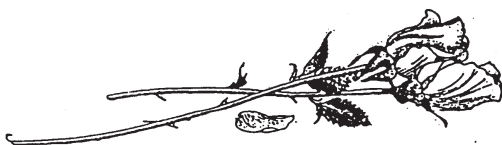
Monday, June 26, 2023
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

“It's All on the Table” - At this meeting the discussion is open to any subject the group would like to take on. What question have you always wanted to ask but didn't? Is there something about your grief journey that has been troubling you and you would welcome suggestions and support from the group about handling it? Sometimes it is difficult to bring up a subject because you may feel you are the only one experiencing the issues/problem. But you might be surprised to learn others have had the same issue/problem. Let's let this meeting be an opportunity to open up to whatever topics, thoughts, problems you would like to bring up for discussion. You are in a safe space to do so.

Meetings are always held on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted. Listen to radio & TV for cancellations due to severe weather conditions. Always check the Topeka TCF Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) under “Meetings” for latest information.

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purposes are to promote and aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experience following the death of a child of any age, from any cause; and to foster the physical and emotional health of all bereaved parents, grandparents and surviving siblings.

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TCF Mission Statement: *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.*

We Need Not Walk Alone

We Would Like to Thank the Following for Sponsoring this Edition of the Newsletter

*Susan Bartley in loving memory of her son
Kyle J. Bartley who was born on June 22nd*

*Carol Cummings in loving memory of her son
Patrick Cummings who died on June 27th*

*Bob & Kayla Dieball in loving memory of their daughter
Callea Breiner who was born on May 29th*

*Loretta Drabek in loving memory of her son
Aaron Diehl who died on April 7th*

*Carla Gilbert in loving memory of her sister Janet Pace
who died on June 10th and her son
Richard Gilbert who died on April 10th*

*Mark & Debi Harvey in loving memory of their son
Nathan Harvey who died on April 10th*

*Ann Hermreck in loving memory of her son
Mitchell Hermreck who died on May 12th*

*Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their
daughter Teresa Jenkins Carson who was born on
April 17th and died on June 17th*

*Tom & Mary Sue Kraft in loving memory of their son
Tyler Kraft who was born on April 30th*

*Mary Lindeen in loving memory of her grandson
Drew Lindeen who was born in May 8th*

*Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her
daughter Maddie Ray Nail and his son Braden Neddermeyer*

*Mike & Valerie Self in loving memory of their son
Nathaniel DeWit Self who was born on April 21st*

*Damon & Collene Tucker in loving memory of their
Brittany Nicole Tucker who was born on April 30th*

*Steve & Marilyn Waugh in loving memory of their
daughter Melinda Waugh who was born on May 7th*

*Todd & Kathleen Williams in loving memory of their
infant son who was stillborn on February 23rd*

Please Note:

If you wish to sponsor the
next newsletter
(July ~ Aug ~ Sept 2023)
we must receive your information
and \$30.00 check by June 1, 2023.
Make checks payable to:
Topeka TCF Chapter



A Special and Important Message to Our New Compassionate Friends

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least **three** tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel your grief journey, and most assuredly, you will find hope along the way. We truly care about you and want to make certain that no bereaved parent ever needs to walk this path alone.

---Topeka TCF Chapter Steering Committee

Additional Support Group Resources

HEALs - Healing after loss of suicide offers support to all survivors affected by the loss of a loved one to suicide. Meetings are at 6:30-8:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Pozez Center (north side of Stormont Vail). Contact Information: Sandy Reams 785-249-3792 or email TopekaHeals@gmail.com

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Pozez Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email Irosen@stormontvail.org. For information call (785) 354-5225.

From Victims to Survivors - Support group for families who have had a loved one murdered. The group meets the fourth or last Wednesday of each month at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4775 S.W. 21st. For more information, call Bill Lucero at 232-5958 or see <http://fromvictimstosurvivors.com>.

ATTENTION!

In order to cut down on the printing and mailing costs for this newsletter, the Steering Committee encourages you to choose to receive the newsletters in PDF via your email address. If interested, please send your name and preferred email address to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614. Your email will only be used to send the newsletter or any TCF meeting/special event notifications. You can also access past and current issues of the newsletter on our Topeka Chapter website www.tcftopeks.org

New Phone Contact #

**As of 1 January, 2022, the new phone contact number for the Topeka Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is:
1-785-817-1748**

And We Remember . . .

Because of the potential for the hurtful crime of identity theft, TCF Chapter Newsletters will now only publish the date of a child's birth or death without listing the year of the event. This is a directive from TCF National to protect all TCF members. Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing database will be included in the We Remember section.

APRIL ~

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, who died on April 15th

Teresa Jenkins Carson, daughter of Phillip and Louise Jenkins, who was born on April 7th

Carly Kathleen Cornelison, daughter of Corie Green, who was born on April 17th

Tyler Kraft, son of Tom and Mary Sue Kraft, who was born on April 30th

Kristi Diaz, daughter of Julie Diaz, who died on April 7th

Michael Ray Donoho, son of Tammy Collins and Dennis Donoho; and stepson of Edward Collins and Debbie Donoho, who died on April 11th

Jeff Fitzgibbons, son of Bill and Jean Fitzgibbons, who died on April 8th

Ryan Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on April 24th

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, who died on April 10th

Spenser Thomas Good, son of Margaret Kramar, who died on April 30th

Nathan Harvey, son of Mark and Debi Harvey; brother of Rachel, Amanda and Caleb Harvey; grandson of Velata Tibbs, who died on April 10th

Tara Kelly, daughter of Carrie Kelly, who died on April 20th

Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who was born on April 22nd

Tabith Krystofosky, sister of Darrell "Bo" Cremer, Jr., who was born on April 11th

Vicki Rae (Luthye) Lee, daughter of the late Dale and Elma Luthye, who died on June 19th

Dennis Montgomery, grandson of Janet Hamilton, who was born in April.

Morgan Myers, daughter of Alta and Rocky Myers, who died on April 3rd

Kyle Neidigh, son of Rosemary Robledo, who was born on April 21st

Eric Alan Palmberg, son of Jim and Doris Palmberg, who was born on April 14th

Evan Michael Schuetz, son of Tom and Debbie Schuetz, who died on April 12th

Nathaniel "Nate" Self, son of Mike and Valerie Self, who was born on April 21st

Sydney Diane Tate, daughter of Jeff and Misty Tate, who was born on April 30th

Brittany Nicole Tucker, daughter of Damon and Collene Tucker, who was born on April 30th

Taylor William Clay Watson, son of Terry and Kathy Watson, who was born on April 12th

Christopher Wempe, son of Dan and JoAnn Wempe, who died on May 12th

MAY ~

Diane Joy Bandstra, daughter of Bert and Elaine Bandstra, who was born on May 24th

Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, who died on May 6th

Callea Breiner, daughter of Bob and Kayla Dieball, who was born on May 29th

Dan Evans, brother of Drew Evans, born in April and died on May 21st

Claire Elise Fisher, daughter of Debra Fisher, who was born on May 15th

Randy Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on May 14th

Anthony James Forshee, son of Darren and Gloria Forshee, who died on May 15th

Carter James Friess, son of Jennifer Friess, who died on May 19th

Mitchell Hermreck, son of Dennis and Ann Hermreck; brother of Shelby and Raegan, who died on May 12th

Marshall Hille, son of Paula Ackerman, who died on May 16th

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who died on May 7th

Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, who was born on May 8th

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who was born on May 3rd

Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, who died on May 2nd

Andrew Garrett Lindeen, grandson of Mary J. Lindeen, who was born May 8th

Rachel Diana Sowers, daughter of Bill and Diana Sowers, who died on May 17th

Chad Williams, son of Clayton and Sharon Williams, who was born on May 30th

JUNE ~

Matthew Wayne Arnold, son of Don and Susan Arnold, who died on June 11th

Kyle Bartley, son of Susan Bartley, who was born on June 22nd

Teresa Jenkins Carson, daughter of Phillip and Louise Jenkins, died on June 17th

Kale Cauthon, son of Denise Cauthon; brother of Josh and Cam, who was born on June 14th

Patrick Cummings, son of Carol Cummings, who died on June 27th

Jeff Darting, son of Gerry and Judy Darting and brother of Sarah Escobar and Jenny Darting, who was born on June 26th

Michael Donoho, son of Dennis and Tammy Donoho Collins and stepson to Ed Collins and Debbie Donoho, who was born on June 24th

Donnie Dotty, son of Donald and Joanne Dotty, who was born on June 5th and died on June 6th

Randy Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who died on June 10th

Jeremy Scott Goehl, son of Danny and Kim Goehl, who died on June 17th

Spencer Michael Haynes, son of Shelly Frederick-Haynes, who was born on June 17th

McKenzie Lucille Hinck, daughter of Lonnie and Kimberly Hinck, who died on June 28th

Jonathan Kaspar, son of Jeffrey and Susan Kaspar, sister of Jen Kaspar who died on June 4th

Joel Andrew Knight, son of Jim and Gloria Knight, who was born on June 24th

Nicholas Swanson, son of Candi Kuipers; brother of Tayla and Jaythan, who was born on June 19th

Richard L. "Rick" Linder, Jr., son of Richard and Pat Linder, who was born on June 26th

Vicki Rae (Luthye) Lee, daughter of Elma and the late Dale Luthye, who died on June 19th

Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, who died on June 27th

Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill, daughter of Lori Neddermeyer and Eric Naill; step-daughter of Mark Neddermeyer; sister of Jesse and Allie Naill; step-sister of Cale and Braden Neddermeyer; and granddaughter of Bruce and Ginny Miller and Allan and Marge Neddermeyer, who was born on June 17th

Tracie Nelson, daughter of Shari Brandenburgh, who died on June 7th

Brent Andrew Nothern, son of Austin and Marianna Nothern, who was born on June 8th

Janet Pace, daughter of Barbara Hale, sister of Carla Gilbert and Sara Wallo, and mother of Shauna Andersen who died on June 10th

Jeremy Joseph Pechanee, son of Pamela Pechanee, who was born on June 13th

Aurora Mae Philippi, daughter of Chris and Trista Philippi, born and died June 17th

Alexis "Lexie" Diane Salmon, granddaughter of Candy Morgan and Robin Heuer, who died on June 5th

Donald (Donnie) Warren, son of Nancy McCune, who died on June 28th

Michael Scott Watson, son of Warren and Beth Watson, who was born on June 4th



*(Use the form below to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing, you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter.)*

And We Remember - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in this section, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email to chanx2@cox.net< We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those requesting it. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____

Son ___ Daughter ___ Grandson ___ Granddaughter ___ Brother ___ Sister ___

Date of Birth _____

Date of Death _____

Father _____

Mother _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Note: Please list address and phone #. You will only be contacted if there is a question about your listing.
Is this a change of address for you? (please circle) YES NO

How to Recognize Your Grief Triggers: Step-By-Step

By Dr. Alejandra Vasquez, JD, CT, Certified Grief Counselor

Grief triggers can be best described as sudden reminders that your loved one has died that generate powerful emotional responses within you. Dealing with grief triggers may result from even unexpectedly encountering situations that remind you of your loved one who has died.

These reminders elicit strong emotions that may take you back into your grief. You may experience a sudden burst of crying, anger, rage, confusion, or deep sorrow, among other more common emotional expressions associated with grief. When taken aback by something as strong or as emotional as a grief trigger, you may be wondering... "What just happened? I thought I was over this."

How do people manage grief triggers? What are they, anyway?

What's a Grief Trigger? Grief triggers are anything that causes you to revert into your grief without warning. Sudden and intense feelings of distress, pain, and sorrow usually accompany. Some of the more common triggers are milestone dates like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays.

Although you may anticipate that these days will be incredibly tough on you, your response to them may not fully manifest until you experience such a triggering event. Other types of grief triggers may sneak up on you. You may be going about your routine having a good day, and seemingly out of nowhere, grief will strike and overwhelm you. Although anything can serve as a grief trigger, below, you'll find some common examples.

Examples of grief triggers

- **Milestones.** Invitations to weddings or graduations often trigger emotional grief responses. These types of life's milestones are some of the most common times when you'll experience sadness over your loss even when you thought you had your grief under control.
- **Special occasions.** Holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and other special days throughout the year cause significant pain when you've lost a loved one. These are constant reminders that'll likely trigger some semblance of grief for some time to come.
- **Favorite song.** A particular song dedicated to you by your loved one who's died may continue to trigger a certain level of grief regardless of how many years have passed since their death.
- **Smells or sounds.** The scent of a particular fragrance or the sounds of children playing may cause you to revert to feeling grief over your loss. Certain sounds and smells that take you back are that of your loved one's signature scent, a favorite brand of cigar, or children laughing and playing at a distance.
- **Lost opportunities.** Bring Your Child to Work Day, father/daughter or mother/son dances, vacations - these all tend to call attention to your loss. If your spouse or child has died, in particular, you may find that these events bring your loss to the forefront.

Steps for Recognizing Your Grief Triggers

After losing a loved one, your life and your reality will never be the same. It may take some time for you to process and accept that your loved one is no longer here. Once the fact sets in, your grief can take on an entirely new direction.

You'll start to notice that certain things set off your grief responses without immediately realizing why you're feeling the way you do.

The following steps will help you recognize when what you're feeling is attributed to your grief. You'll need to develop some coping skills since grief triggers can suddenly and unexpectedly elicit any or all of the following emotions:

- **Anger**
- **Anxiety**
- **Crying**
- **Guilt**
- **Lack of motivation**
- **Loneliness**

1. Mark your calendar - One of the simplest things that you can do to help you recognize when a grief trigger is approaching is to mark all special days on your calendar. You may not need a reminder of these dates and holidays, but planning for them by keeping them on your calendar may help you better cope when the day arrives. If you're not yet ready to face a year's worth of special days, ask a close friend or loved one to help you with marking these occasions.

2. Identify the trigger - Whenever grief strikes out of the blue, and you're wondering why you're suddenly overwhelmed with grief, take note of what's happening to make you feel that way. Usually, it's something that may have caused you to remember an obscure detail of your loved one, such as a hidden mole or their uneven toes. Once you become aware of some of your triggers, you'll be better able to deflect the onset of grief at inopportune times.

3. Accept your feelings - Trying to hide how you feel from yourself and others only prolong the grief process. Acceptance of your loss, your feelings, and emotions will help you understand when these emotions come up seemingly out of nowhere. It's all part of the grief reaction to loss. In time, it'll become second nature to feel, accept, and let go of these waves of grief. Like the ebb and flow of the ocean waves, when expected, you anticipate the next one and brace yourself for it.

4. Find your special place - Grief triggers usually come about unexpectedly. You may not be able to plan for each instance, but you can ensure that you have a safe place to go to be alone. Finding a special place where you can grieve in private will help you gain better control of each time grief rears its head. A particular space for grieving alone and away from it all can be a closet in your home, an outdoor space, or even your vehicle.

5. Learn about grief - Reading books of grief will help you understand not only what grief is and how it affects you, but you'll also learn to recognize when unexpected grief pops up. The more you read about the different types of grief there are, the usual reactions to it, and how the grieving process works, the quicker you'll find your way through your grief. Before you know it, you'll be able to reclaim your joy and happiness and move forward with your life in your new existence.

6. Practice positive self-talk

When you've become aware that your grief's been triggered, change your internal dialogue in how you respond to your feelings and emotions. Negative self-talk can hurt the way you work through your grief. Practice instead having gratitude despite your losses, being hopeful for the future, and accepting the death of your loved one. Positive self-talk includes being loving and kind to yourself instead of talking down to yourself, blaming yourself, or feeling guilty over the death of your loved one.

7. Anticipate and minimize

Learning to anticipate your grief triggers beyond calendar dates and other special days involves learning about different ways that you may be reminded of your loss. For example, expect that when you walk through most department stores at the mall, you'll likely walk through the fragrance section on your way to wherever it is your going. A familiar scent may hit you as you make your way through the store triggering your memory and emotions. Find workarounds to avoid these sections of the store or mall that will recall painful memories. You can anticipate and minimize your grief triggers by strategically planning as you go about your daily activities.

8. Stay on course

Grief triggers don't define the course of your grief process. They are temporary emotional setbacks that can quickly come and go. When you experience overwhelming grief sensations when you thought you were getting past your grief, it can be unsettling. Don't allow these episodes to derail your progress. Staying on course on your path to grief recovery may seem challenging at times like these, but setbacks don't need to hold you back.

9. Gauge your reactions

Just as no two people will ever grieve the same way, no two people will identically experience grief triggers. Try and avoid comparing your grief to others. Even if you've both suffered the same loss at the same time, understand that your reactions are yours alone. Don't compare the way you're grieving to the way others are taking to their losses. You don't know how someone's feeling on the inside or how their grief is affecting them.

10. Feeling anxious

Feelings of fear and anxiety are often the precursors to a bout of unexpected grief. Take a step back from what's causing these emotional reactions so that you're able to assess what's going. Once you recognize the source, either move through your grief or walk away from the situation. When grief anxiety is triggered, it's usually a sign that you've found yourself in an uncomfortable position.

Recognize that you don't have to be brave and simply withstand these moments, and it's okay to come back to whatever you were doing at a later time.

11. Feeling hopeless

Seeking online therapy or counseling can help you sort through your grief so that you're better prepared to cope with it when triggered. There are many options for you to get the help you need without having to go into a therapist's office. More and more services are now available to you online for those times when you're feeling hopeless and unable to cope.

Frequently Asked Questions: Grief Triggers

Individuals dealing with loss may not always recognize the circumstances and events that trigger strong grief responses. Understanding why a specific date, time, place, smell, or even a gesture evokes adverse emotional reactions comes with time. When death or loss has just occurred, emotions are generally raw and unpredictable.

However, as time goes on, your pain and sorrow begin to subside, and you start to feel better. Then a triggering event occurs, which can make your feelings spiral out of control. Here are some common questions on how to deal with grief triggers.

Should you avoid your grief triggers?

Every person has a unique way of dealing with grief. Whether

you choose to confront your triggers or avoid them altogether is something you'll need to see what works best for you. Avoiding grief triggers, in the beginning, is not always an entirely bad idea. Some people may need to use this as a coping mechanism to get them through the early stages of grief until they feel stronger and more capable of handling their emotions.

Consider setting a future date, such as an anniversary or other significant day, to be at one with your grief. Begin emotionally preparing yourself for this day and consider enlisting your loved one's support to help you get through.

What's a delayed grief trigger?

When external forces complicate the grieving process, there tends to be a delay in the things that trigger your pain and sorrow. For example, an individual acting as the caregiver for a parent who's died may not realize their parent's death's impact until much later. Exhaustion from overwork, caring for their loved ones, and overall fatigue may keep them from focusing on their grief.

At some point, the realization hits that their parent's presence and daily routines are no longer there and they now have to face life without them. The emotional response to their loss may come many weeks or months after their parent's death. Their grief may be triggered by seeing hospice come in to remove medical equipment from their home or by a final expense bill arriving in the mail.

How can you deal with unexpected grief triggers?

Having a carefully laid out plan for dealing with unexpected grief triggers is one of the best ways of preparing yourself for these responses. Generally, coming to terms with your loss and understanding the feelings and emotions that stem from grief are essential in coping with spontaneous grief reactions.

Keep a calendar of all special dates, anniversaries, and other markers on the calendar when you're more likely to suffer from an unexpected grief reaction. Try to plan for those days from where you'll be, what you'll do, and who you'll be with at different times of the day. Earmark exits, private areas, and have alternative plans if things get uncomfortable for you or if you need a place to retreat.

How can you help a loved one deal with grief triggers?

A loved one who's dealing with unexpected grief reactions may need some time to themselves to be alone with their grief and regroup. Consider that men and women grieve differently, and a loved one's response to their suffering isn't a personal rejection of you.

You can offer your love and support in many ways by first recognizing their grief and loss. Don't hesitate to take the initiative of excusing yourselves from public spaces if the situation warrants. If triggers occur at home, give your loved one space to process their emotions without forcing them to share how they're feeling with you.

Recognizing Your Grief Triggers

The pain of loss can seem overwhelming. You may wonder how long does grief last, but the process is different for everyone. You don't always need to be anxious about when the next triggering event will take place. Recognizing your grief triggers is half the battle. Once you know why you're feeling the way you are, you can become adept at finding solutions that work to help get you through your grief.

Online Support Communities: An Important Way That We're Here for our TCF Family.

One of the most far-reaching and valuable ways that we offer support to TCF members is through our online chat and private Facebook groups. With over 286,000 followers on our main Compassionate Friends USA Facebook page, we also offer over 40 different private Facebook groups serving 102,000 members collectively. Additionally, TCF offers chat rooms that provide a space for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings to meet every day to connect, share, and support each other. To find support via an online group of The Compassionate Friends, please visit <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/.../online-communities/>.

How To Access To Compassionate Friends Facebook Groups

For the national TCF Facebook page go to Facebook and enter Compassionate Friends USA.

For individual groups within Facebook, please go to [compassionatefriends.org](https://www.compassionatefriends.org) or use key word "Compassionate Friends". Click on Find Support then click On-Line Communities then click on View Groups or click on Resources then click on 24/7 Private Facebook Groups. The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so we can confirm your request. If you are waiting approval, please message one of the administrators. Join requests to our Facebook groups must be requested personally, therefore when you wish to share the group with someone please pass along the link to the group.

Accessing Brochures/E-Newsletter

To access various brochures on dealing with various aspects of grief go to [compassionatefriends.org](https://www.compassionatefriends.org) or use key word "Compassionate Friends." Click on Resources then click Brochures Available. You can also register for the national e-newsletter at this site also.

Are You Moving?

If you move, please let us know your new address so you can continue to receive this newsletter. It costs the Chapter 71 cents every time a newsletter is returned by the Post Office with an outdated address. Please send address changes to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may email address changes to chanx2@cox.net. We appreciate your cooperation as this will save the Chapter money which can be better spent on bereavement outreach. If, for any reason, you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, please drop me a note or email and I will take your name off the list. If you have chosen the e-newsletter option, please keep me aware of any email address changes.

There Is Healing In Speaking A Name

Written by Clara Hinton | Jan 18, 2002

Following the death of a child, parents are left with a void that they never before thought possible. Every activity, every hour of the day, and every thought seem to have an emptiness that will not go away. In order to do something to help cushion the pain, parents will often want to talk about their child to anyone who will listen.

Talking about the child who died brings wonderful relief and comfort to parents. They find great joy in reminiscing about past vacations and holidays with their child. There is such benefit in recalling funny antics that involved their son or daughter. As the parents talk openly and freely about their child, it gives a much-needed reassurance that the child who has died is remembered.

There is a problem, though, with parents desiring to talk with friends about their deceased child. A lot of the time, those who are closest feel very uncomfortable about the death of the child. There is the feeling that being together with friends, and talking about the child who is now not here, will only bring up very sad memories of what has happened. Many times friends refuse to do the one thing parents need the most—to speak the child's name. Friends will often shut down and fail to mention the child by name ever again. Many parents are left feeling very abandoned by this. They begin thinking that even their best friends don't care!

What should a friend do? First of all, be honest. Simply explain that it is going to take a while before you can join in on conversations about the child who has died. And, it is going to take you even longer to be able to use the child's name. Explain that you will certainly try to verbalize their child's name, and you will make every attempt to do so. Parents will greatly appreciate your honesty, and it will ease the pain of thinking that you don't care.

Allow the parents of the deceased child the freedom to talk. There is great healing in knowing that you have friends who care, who will allow you to talk openly about your child, and who will listen as you frequently use your child's name. There is such healing in hearing the child's name! A name personalizes everything. When a parent can say "my Aimee" instead of "my daughter", they feel like Aimee is being acknowledged as "their child"—the only Aimee, the one who belonged only to them.

As you hear the deceased child's name frequently being spoken, changes will occur within you. Sooner than you think, you too, will be saying such things as "I remember the day Aimee and Alyssa made mud cakes together. They were determined to make us eat those things!" The more you use the child's name, the more comfortable you will become.

Friends want to help their friends through the pain of child loss. By allowing the parents to use their child's name in front of you, you are helping them acknowledge not just the fact that their child died, but that their child lived. When a parent hears someone whisper their child's name, their hearts soar! "Someone remembered! Someone really remembered!"

By using the deceased child's name, you show the parents that their child is still alive in your memory and in your thoughts. There is great healing when a parent hears someone remember their child—their special child—by name!

My Grief Mosaic

By Daina Mahon
Grief Digest Magazine, February 2013

I'm told the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey has stunningly beautiful mosaics. The amazing thing about these particular mosaics is that Muslim conquerors in 1453 plastered over them. The beauty of those works of art was deeply hidden for over five-hundred years. With the birth of the modern nation of Turkey, the Hagia Sophia became a museum, and the plaster was painstakingly removed. Among the many pieces of glass there were pieces of gold and silver, lapis lazuli, and many other precious metals. The main dome is resplendent again with light and beauty. Can you imagine these breathtakingly beautiful mosaics hidden for centuries behind plaster?

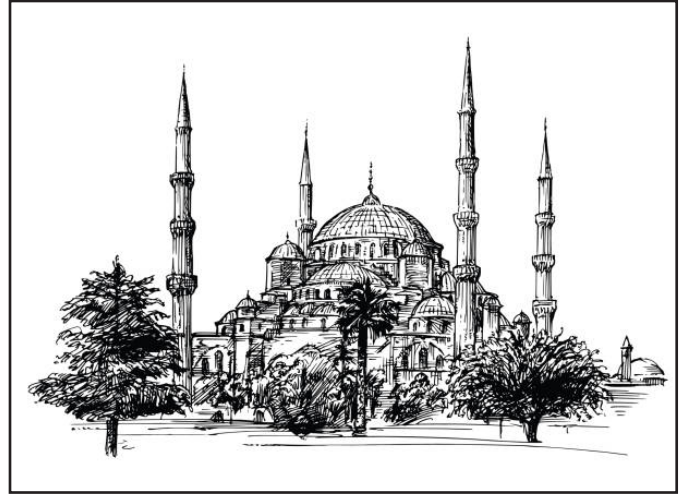
Reading about and looking at pictures of the Hagia Sophia got me to wondering if I have plastered over my pain and loss as I respond to a lack of sensitivity by friends and family who avoid talking about my child. It pains me very much to feel dismissed or ignored when I mention Devin. The discomfort of others adds another layer of cover to my pain. We who are grieving have a deep need for acknowledgment that our children lived, mattered and continue to be loved. As ignorance and the lack of compassion cover my heart, I realize I could become hard and brittle like plaster.

I prefer to see my grief as a mosaic. Each piece has its own unique dimension. My mosaic began with pieces of violet and black. The colors are almost violent in their rage and pain. These colors became merged with that of indigo purple, and magenta. To me, they represent intensity. Everything about my daughter's death occurred in intensity: sorrow, hurt, anger and inconsolability appeared. These pieces along with violet and black collided and enshrouded my grief design. These colorations were followed by blues: royal blue, midnight blue, ultramarine and peacock encroached on the ferocity of the beginning pieces. Acuteness was still dominant yet a sliver of acceptance emerged.

The next renderings were of dark greens. In our culture, green symbolizes hope and growth, while in some others it is associated with death, sickness, envy and the devil. These contradictions emerged in my grief mosaic. Hope finally arrived, but the incompatible concession that Devin was not coming back kept my color scheme somber.

Today emergent flashes of emerald, turquoise, maroon, fuchsia and a brilliant yellow (Devin's color) burst in. Is my grief mosaic complete? Will it ever be? Will I be whole and healed one day? In the words of Barbara Jordan, "I live a day at a time. Each day I look for a kernel of excitement...don't ask me about tomorrow."

How is it with you? Have you begun to uncover the hard shell of plaster protecting the colors of your soul? Have you allowed the light in? May each of us have the courage to chip away at the hardness and allow beauty in our lives once more.



*(About Daina Mahon - Daina Simpson Mahon is an educator who worked as a private school principal for ten years, an English teacher and Outreach teacher to high school students for seven years, and a middle school language arts teacher for eight years. Teaching writing has been a passion of Daina's for many years, but her proudest accomplishment has been being Devin's mom. Devin was killed September 25, 2006, at the age of twenty-seven, as she rode her bicycle in Oxnard, California. Daina has written poetry and musings, and she has journaled as a way to express her grief. Devin was a writer, musician, actor, and lover of life.
- See more at: <http://griefdigestmagazine.com/2013/02/my-grief-mosaic/#sthash.u4j53Yld.dpuf>*

Musings

Isn't it strange that things we once took for granted, have changed so much?

Things like the soft wings of a brilliant colored butterfly, or the radiant colors in the sky at dawn and sunset or perhaps a song we heard in passing or a movie, we once took for granted. But now, these very same things can bring on tears and leave us feeling a deep sense of longing.

Why? Are these not the same as before? What changed? We did. The things we once took for granted are now viewed with much more than human eyes. We now experience these things through the eyes of a broken heart.

I believe grief gives us a very different view on things. A heart bruised and broken by loss has a new tenderness and compassion. Just look inside yourself at how your views have changed. I also believe this is our children speaking to us saying ... look at the beauty and know that I am still near.

~ Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta,
In Memory of my son Steven Simmons

GRADUATION—A TIME TO REMEMBER

I was driving down the road the other day, thinking of how the retail market makes any event an opportunity for revenue. Graduation seems to fall into that category, with cards and gifts for every Graduate. This time of year reminds me that my graduation from high school was a bittersweet time.

Really, it was the first time I had “surpassed” my older brother, David, in anything significant. I turned the age that he was when he died, 18, in the beginning of my senior year of high school. That year was difficult for me, as I felt that I was getting to move past where he had been cut short. Graduation day was no exception.



I was happy to be getting out of high school, and looking forward to that coming August when I would go to college. But why was I getting to do these things, and not David? What made me so special that I got to stay here and experience these things? I still am not quite sure

of the answer to those questions.

Graduation from high school was really just the first of many events which I have gotten to experience that David never will. College graduation, my wedding, and the birth of my two children are examples. And for me, each event has been a bit bittersweet.

The good news is this: that while time does make it easier to bear day-to-day activities without your sibling, each major event in your life presents itself as a new opportunity to remember your brother or sister, as well. For me, figuring that out was a huge relief, as it meant that my fear of forgetting David was not something I needed to worry about any more. His memory is just as alive for me today, 15-1/2 years later, as it was when I took that walk across the stage to accept my high school diploma.

~ Amy Baker Ferry
TCF Heart of Florida Chapter
In loving memory of my brother, David

***And when I turned to face grief,
I saw that it was just love in a heavy coat.***

~ Shannon Barry

MY “CHRIS” BIRDS

*It's the twigs below the birdhouse
Lets me know your birthday's near
This back yard once sat empty
Not a bird in sight all year*

*We placed the houses in our yard
To give the birds a home
But never did we see one
Til the day that you went home*

*We looked outside on that day
We laid you in the ground
On that dark day in September
The starlings swarmed around*

*We had never seen so many
Certainly not in our back yard
But there they were aplenty
On that day that was so hard*

*They came again in the Spring
Round your birthday, the end of March
The starlings flew around again
Bringing twigs, a home to start*

*So March and in September
Are special months indeed
The starlings come to see us
They recognize our need*

*Because they came when you left
They were never here before
I've named them after you my son
Your legacy, I'm sure*

*So, it's these twigs below the birdhouse
That lets me know that you are near
My “Chris birds” come a-callin
Reminding me of you so dear*

~ Robyn Kingery
In Memory of my son,
Chris Kingery



A Bear Hug for Father's Day

As Father's Day approaches, we are reminded of the significant contributions and unique love of fathers and stepfathers. Their defined role, after the death of their children, is to support their wives and surviving children. But their pain is deep.

Men, by their nature and in response to our society's expectations, do not usually grieve as openly as women. They do not talk as candidly about their loss. They generally do not reach out to others for comfort. They are, after all, the rock, the solid center of the family. Their wife's pain supersedes their pain because women are fragile. Or so we are told.

Yet, as I look into the eyes of so many bereaved fathers, I see a deep, gripping pain. The tears left unshed, the words that are never spoken, the anger, guilt and agony....all remain in the eyes of the bereaved father.

What can a father do? Talk with other bereaved fathers. Read books written by bereaved fathers. Talk with spouses, private counselors and close friends who are not as structured in their "male" societal roles. Try to attend three meetings of Compassionate Friends. You don't have to talk. But you might decide to express a single thought or idea, logically presented, to the small group. You might find peace in this place, and then again, you might not. But, as my own dad often said, "Step up to the plate and see what happens." He was a pretty wise man.....a child of the depression, a football player, Greatest Generation, WW II Marine, a fighter, a provider, a protector....a man's man. He endured much in his 78 years, and I only saw him cry a few times.

But when his friend lost a child, my tough dad was the first one to reach out with a bear hug that wouldn't let go until the tears began to flow. They both cried. They both knew that the agony of losing a child was far worse than the horrors of war. Together, they cried.

Happy Father's Day....May your bear hugs be many and your memories become sweeter with each passing year. May your child live forever in your heart so that peace embraces you always.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
And my father, James M. Mennen*

Mother's Day Revisited

Many of us in TCF do not look forward to Mother's Day. On this holiday, when the whole nation is celebrating the joys of parenthood, grieving parents often feel a special anguish.

Mother's Day this year looms as a particularly difficult milestone for me, Sunday, May 10, 1998, is not only Mother's Day but also the second anniversary of the death of my ten-year-old son, Jacob. Because this day of private sadness also happens to be a day of public celebration, I decided that I should start thinking early about the occasion. I engaged in a little research about the holiday and learned a story that I think is worth sharing.

Mother's Day was the creation of a woman named Anna Jarvis in the early years of this century. Anna, who never married and never had children of her own, devoted herself to establishing a national Mother's Day as a way of honoring her beloved mother, who died on May 9, 1905. In Anna's view, her mother deserved a memorial because she had lived selflessly and endured considerable suffering - seven of her eleven children had died in early childhood. According to historians, Anna's mother mourned the deaths of her children throughout her life.

Anna insisted that the holiday always fall on a Sunday so that it would retain its spiritual moorings. Because of her efforts, President Woodrow Wilson finally proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Although Anna couldn't prevent the new holiday from quickly becoming a marketing phenomenon, she did try. Speaking out against "the mire of commercialization" that threatened to engulf Mother's Day, Anna attempted to preserve her creation as a true "holy day," a time for solemn reflection and prayer.

Mother's Day, then, was borne of a daughter's grief and love. More importantly, it was intended as a tribute to a bereaved mother-a brave woman who lost multiple children but who managed to live with an abiding kindness and generosity toward others. I like knowing this background, and my attitude towards Mother's Day has been colored by the knowledge. The holiday now makes me think of the common sorrow that links all bereaved parents. I feel a bond with Anna's mother that stretches over time and space. In a broader sense, the woman for whom the holiday was founded reminds me of people I've met at TCF who have continued to live productive, meaningful lives in the face of unthinkable loss.

Finally, Mother's Day in its origins symbolizes both the joy and the vulnerability inherent in parenthood. Anna's mother knew all too well that from the moment a child is born, hope and the possibility of tragedy go hand in hand. She understood the fragility of life.

Enriched by its own history, Mother's Day is easier for me to tolerate. The coincidence of dates this year-Mother's Day and the anniversary of my son's death-is not as jarring as it once seemed. Although the commercial images of the modern Mother's Day still make me wince, I can turn off the television and envision the kind of day that Anna Jarvis had in mind: a time for quiet reflection and the sharing of cherished memories.

*Barbara Atwood
In memory of Jacob
TCF, Tucson, Arizona*

Happy Birthday, Braden Mark Neddermeyer & Madison "Maddie" Rae Nail



Braden and Maddie celebrating their last birthdays in 2021 and 2011 with purple trimmed cake – forever ages 29 and 15.



Braden and Maddie always had so much fun together

We miss you on your birthdays. You two had as much fun together as you spent "fighting", and competing in video games - just like siblings do. Now, you are together looking down here hoping we will all just go tubing or fishing now and then!

Braden - Love, Dad, Lori, Mom, Ken, Cale, Allie, Madison, Kayson, Grandma & Grandpa Neddermeyer, Ginny, Bruce, Lisa, Grandma Laura, plus all of your aunts, uncles & cousins

Maddie - Love, Mark, Mom, Dad, Veronica, Cale, Allie, Kayson, Grams, Gramps, Grandma Laura, Grandma Marge & Grandpa Allan, plus all of your aunts, uncles & cousins



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter, c/o Midland Hospice Care, Inc.
200 S.W. Frazier Circle, Topeka, KS 66606-2800

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings.

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TCF 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.