



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Quarterly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcf.topeka.org

Jant ~ Feb ~ March ~ 2023
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629

*Please note that **February** and **March** Meetings will be in O'Connor Hall rather than our regular meeting space in the Culhane Room. Please follow directional signs.*

JANUARY MEETING

Monday, January 23, 2023
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m. **Culhane Room**

"We Made It Through the Holidays . . . Now What?"- Somehow we have managed to survive the onslaught of holidays that beset us from October through December. This is an opportunity to share what worked and what didn't during this past holiday season. And now we are faced with a new year. What do we do with it? How we choose to move forward in 2023 is really up to us. Let's talk a little about ways in which we can continue to do our grief work, but also begin to integrate back into some of the activities we may have put aside since the death of our child. Are there things we have done that have been helpful in our journey that we want to continue? Let's share moving forward.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 27, 2023
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m. **O'Connor Hall**

"Ways to Honor and Memorialize Your Child"- One of the things that many bereaved parents fear is that their child will not be remembered by others as the years pass. What can we do in honor of our child to carry their legacy forward? Some find it helpful to become involved in charities or causes that were important to their child. Others may choose to have their loved one remembered through a tangible gift like a scholarship in their name. There are many possibilities to honor that special life. Let's talk about ways to honor our child's memory

MARCH MEETING

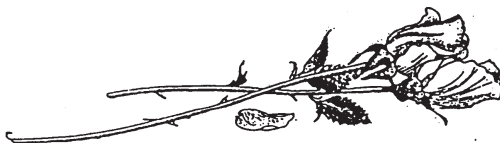
Monday, March 27, 2023
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m. **O'Connor Hall**

"Signs, Symbols and Dreams" - At this meeting we talked about unusual happenings we may have experienced since the death of our child, grandchild or sibling. Bereaved people often talk about something that has happened to them that made them feel as though they were somehow contacted or felt more connected to their loved one. These experiences might include sensing of a presence, hearing a voice, seeing a symbol of something (like a butterfly, a flower, other) that you connect with your child, etc. Sometimes dreams about our child can be comforting, sometimes unsettling. This meeting offers us the opportunity to share such events and experiences in an open and nonjudgemental setting.

*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.tcf.topeka.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

*Gary & Susan Chan in loving memory of their
daughter Rachael Reneé Chan who died on March 17th*

*Dick & Janie Elliot in loving memory of their
daughter Amy Elliott Smith*

*Margaret & Tad Kramar in loving memory of her son
Thomas Spenser Good who was born on January 30th*

*Ralph & Judy Lundin in loving memory of their daughter
Amy Lundin who was born on February 16th*

*Members of the Potwin Presbyterian Church
in support of the Topeka TCF Chapter*

*Don & Julie Strathman in loving memory of their son
Keith who died on January 9th*

*Damon & Collene Tucker in loving memory of their
daughter Brittany Nicole Tucker who died on March 11th*



Please Note:

If you wish to sponsor the next newsletter (April ~ May ~ June 2023)
we must receive your information and \$30.00 check by March 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>.

The first time a memory slides over us like a wave of warmth, we have turned the corner on our grief.

When a once painful reminder evokes a gentle laugh, when we recognize the joy of the present in an image from the past, we have arrived at an important moment. Those memories are being transformed, unmistakable, into messages of hope.

~ Molly Fumia in [Safe Passages](#)

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

Memories

will bring you

love from the past,

courage in the present,

hope for the future.



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

- Sascha Wagner

Love Gifts

**Your Love Gifts Help Spread
the Message of Hope & Healing ~ Won't You Help Today?**

What is a Love Gift? A Love Gift is a gift of money (or books, etc.) to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child, grandchild or sibling who has died, but it may be from individuals who wish to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanks that their children are alive, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help. The Compassionate Friends charges *no individual dues* or fees and depends on such Love Gifts to meet the Chapter's expenses, including the printing and mailing of this newsletter. **When you make a donation, make sure to check to see if your employer may have a "matching gifts" program** as this could double the amount of your donation. If you are not sure whether your company has such a program, check with your Personnel Department. This month we thank the following:

♥ *Eric Naill in loving memory of his daughter Maddie Nail who died on March 19th*

♥ *Bert & Elaine Bandstra in loving memory of their daughter Diane Joy Bandstra
who was born on May 24th and died on July 28th*

Your gifts enable us to print this newsletter and reach out to newly bereaved families. Donations are our only source of income and are **tax deductible**. If you would like to sponsor a newsletter, the cost is \$30.00. If we have more than one sponsor, we recognize all of them. If you wish to send a Love Gift, any amount is appreciated. It is whatever you feel you can give. Donations of books that you have found helpful to the Topeka Chapter Library are also greatly appreciated, and it is a nice way to remember your child or other loved one. If you would like to send a Love Gift or a Newsletter Sponsorship, you may do so by sending it to: The Compassionate Friends, c/o Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. For Newsletter Sponsorships, please indicate which issue you wish to sponsor (Jan/Feb/March, April/May/June, July/August/September, October/November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".

ATTENTION

We will be deleting the names of those who did not return their yellow form requesting to be kept on the mailing list through 2023 beginning with the April/May/June 2023 newsletter. If you did not return your form and wish to continue getting the newsletter, we must hear from you by February 1, 2023. The yellow form was in your Oct/Nov/Dec 2022 newsletter and may also be accessed on our Chapter website (www.tcftopeks.org) under "Newsletters". The **ONLY** exception will be for those families who lost a child during 2022 who will remain on the mailing list through 2023. Let us hear from you!!



Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER

- Have you signed up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more participants we have, the more income we can generate. I encourage you to go to www.dillions.com/community-rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity your wish to support. **The Topeka Compassionate Friends Chapter NPO number is TC248.** Once you have done so and have a Dillions Shopper's Card, every time you make a purchase at Dillions a portion of your total will be donated to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program **costs you nothing** and **does not affect your fuel points** for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select Option 3.

Our Thanks to: Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite a portion of the printing cost of this newsletter.

TCF National Office e-mail:
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www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter web and e-mail addresses:
www.tcftopeka.org tcftopeka@gmail.com

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785.842.3610**

**1033 SW GAGE BLVD, STE 200
TOPEKA, KS 66604
785.272.0070**

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.

JANUARY~

Josephine I. Alcala, daughter of Pricilla Alcala, who was born on January 13th and died on January 14th

Olivia Lynn Anderson, daughter of Suzannah Anderson; sister of Eli Anderson, who died on January 17th

Jon Bieker, brother of Andrea Smith; son of Don and Sheryl Bieker who died on January 9th

Aaron M. Campbell, son of Marilyn Campbell, who died on January 29th

Heidi Crarren, daughter of Julie Crarren, who was born on January 22nd

Rebecca Lynne Smith Crismas, daughter of BobbyJean Smith, who died on January 7th

Claire Elise Fisher, daughter of Debra Fisher, died on January 2nd

Anthony James Forshee, son of Darren and Gloria Forshee, who was born on January 9th

Spenser Thomas Good, son of Margaret Kramar, born on January 30th

Justin Grabhorn, son of Philip and Barbara Grabhorn, who died on January 27th

Shawn Michael Hatfield, son of Hank and Cathy Harman, who was born on January 11th

Marshall Hille, son of Paula Ackerman, who was born on January 6th

Todd E. Huss, son of Betty Huss, who died on January 27th

Juan Adan Lucio, son of Dalia Sanchez and Roberto Lucio, who died on January 5th

Eric Alan Palmberg, son of Jim and Doris Palmberg, died on January 1st

Greg Lee Paulson, son-in-law of Frank and Brenda Bissey and brother-in-law of Brad Bissey, born on January 24th

Adam James Reams, son of Gene and Sandy Reams, brother of Nick Reams, who died on January 23rd

Kathryn (Katie) Rush, daughter of Thomas and Barbara Rush, who died on January 24th

Jamie Lynn Russell, daughter of John and Elaine Chandler, who was born on January 7th

Evan Michael Schuetz, son of Tom and Debbie Schuetz, who was born on January 23rd

Keith Strathman, son of Don and Julie Strathman, brother of Becky Strathman, died on January 8th

Brandon Toler, son of Marty Tyson, who died on January 18th

Mary Jane Varner, daughter of Will and Kay Hasty, who died on January 3rd

FEBRUARY~

Erik Acheson, son of Gayle Graham, who was born on February 7th

Charlie Allen, son of Tanya Allen, who was born on February 6th

Carlie Almond, daughter of Brad and Amy Almond, who was born on February 24th

Brian Lynn Blecha, son of Lynn and Alice Blecha, who was born February 9th

Monty Brentlinger, son of Don and Carolyn Brentlinger, who was born on February 6th

Travis Briggs, son of Larry Briggs, who was born on February 24th

Kristy Burton, daughter of Bonnie Bennett, who died on February 5th

Christian K. Charay, son of Alfred Charay and Laurie Charay who died on February 27th

Chazz Robert Exon, son of Stacy Mackey, who was born on October 30th

Rex McCarthy, son of Janet Hamilton, who died in February

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who was born on February 14th

Bradley "Brad" Hurla, son of Mike and Judy Hurla, who died on February 15th

Richard L. "Rick" Linder Jr., son of Richard and Patricia Linder, died February 15th

Gylmn Guerry Lough, son of Billy D. and Inez G. Lough, died February 21st

Billy Lucas, son of Bernie and Jeanette Bialek, died on February 18th

Juan Adan Lucio, son of Dalia Sanchez and Roberto Lucio, who was born on February 15th

William Henry "Hank" Lumpkin, son of Joe and Penny Lumpkin, who was born on February 1st

Amy Lundin, daughter of Ralph and Judy Lundin, who was born on February 16th

Cecil L. Miller, Jr., brother of Brenda Bissey, who died on February 4th

Jeremy Joseph Pechanee, son of Pamela Pechanee, who died on February 22nd

Kiley Ramey, daughter of Gary and Linda Ramey, who was born on February 28th

Otto G. Schnellbacher, son of Mary Therese Sanders, who died on February 20th

Carmen Cristina Urdaneta, daughter of Leonel and Judy Urdaneta, born February 13th; died February 3rd

Mary Jane Varner, daughter of Will and Kay Hasty, who was born on February 8th

Michael Scott Watson, son of Warren and Beth Watson, who died on February 23rd

Joseph White, son of Karen White, who was born on February 28th and died on February 7th

Baby Boy Williams, son of Todd and Kathleen Williams, stillborn February 23rd

George Winter, son of Cindy Taylor and brother of Elizabeth and Jolene Winter, who died on February 15th

MARCH ~

Tyler James Baker, son of Barbara Baker, who died on March 6th

Travis Briggs, son of Larry Briggs, who died on March 28th

Rachael Reneé Chan, daughter of Gary & Susan Chan, who died on March 17th

Cotton Christenson, son of Tracy Christenson, who was born on March 19th

Haley Ayauna Mae Bowman, daughter of Chrissy and Eric Bowman; sister of Herschel, Hanna, Ryan and Lydia; mother of Eli, Everett and Ezekiel, who was born on March 20th and died on March 29th

Eric Joseph Conley, son of Tom and Barbara Conley, who died on March 23rd

Patrick Cummings, son of Carol Cummings, born March 30th

Wendi Sue Cushing, daughter of Scott and Denise Cushing; sister of Deana and Dylan Cushing, born March 17th

Kyle Horn, grandson of Julie Diaz, who died on March 26th

Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, who died on March 25th

Todd E. Huss, son of Betty Huss, who was born on March 14th

Karen Kay Karnes, daughter of Wilson and Maxine Karnes, born March 2nd

Ben Lake, grandson of Patty Lake, who was born on March 21st

Vicki Rae (Luthye) Lee, daughter of Elma and the late Dale Luthye, who was born on March 2nd

Belinda Meier, daughter of Maggie Walshire, who died on March 20th

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, died on March 19th

Tracie Nelson, daughter of Shari Brandenburgh, who was born on March 18th

Alisha Marie Quigley, daughter of Karen Leiker, who was born on March 1st and died on March 12th

Pamela Jaye (Luthye) Rodriguez, daughter of the late Dale Luthye and Elma Luthye, who died on March 1st

Brittany Nicole Tucker, daughter of Damon and Collene Tucker, died March 11th

Jason R. VanDam, son of Will and Kay Hasty, born March 25th

Killian Vincent, son of Levi and Alyssa Vincent, who died on March 13th

Taylor William Clay Watson, son of Terry and Kathy Watson, who died on March 16th

Christopher Wempe, son of Dan and JoAnn Wempe, who was born on March 9th

*(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 __ Grandaughter __ 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**

7 Grief Strategies for the New Year

By Brad Stetson, www.bradstetson.com

The old saying is true: “If there is an elephant in the room, introduce him.” No good purpose is served by denial, yet we are very good at it. And when it comes to facing the pain of our grief with both eyes open, we often turn away instead. But when we have a psychological elephant in the room of our mind, we should acknowledge him, and plan a way to shrink him down to a manageable size then get him on his way. If we’ve had a loss recently, the new year provides a good opportunity for us to be honest about the pain of our grief, and resolve in the months to come to be proactive and do the necessary griefwork to begin addressing the elephant in the room.

#1. Write yourself a comforting and encouraging letter.

Imagine you had a friend who you cared deeply for, and imagine that friend had just experienced the death of someone they love very much. You would want to help them, you’d want to comfort them and encourage them. Well, now substitute yourself for that friend. You are worthy of being comforted and encouraged too, so write yourself a letter saying to yourself the same sorts of things you would say to a good friend. Then, read the letter aloud to yourself once or twice, put it away for a few days or a week, then read it again. Do this for a few months, then write yourself a second letter, and so on. This is an act of self-compassion, treating yourself as gently as you would treat someone else. Avoid thinking that you are so ‘strong’ or ‘solid’ that you don’t need help and tender compassion. That is a misunderstanding of strength and personal fortitude. Feeling intense sorrow and bereavement is not a sign of weakness, to the contrary, it is a sign of deep humanity and personal capacity to love.

#2. Buy a big calendar, and use it.

One of the main problems bereaved people face is the feeling that one day drags into the next, always the same. Grieving people also sometimes get pressured by other well-meaning people into doing activities they really don’t want to do. An ‘appointment calendar’ can solve both of those problems. Large calendars, like a desk calendar, give you room to write. So as the new year begins, grab your pen, sit down with the calendar, and start filling your days with appointments. Appointments with whom? Well, most importantly, with yourself. Without isolating yourself or taking yourself out of social circulation, you can pen in some ‘self-time’ and thereby reserve a lot of valuable quiet time. Now this quiet time does not have to be momentous. Just by reserving time for yourself, you will give yourself time to breathe and reflect as the new year, with all of its demands and changes, unfolds.

Appointments like “movie with me,” or “reading with me,” “journaling with me” or “recreation with me” make it possible for you to always be able to tell others, when asked to go somewhere or do something, “Let me check my calendar, I may have an appointment.” This way you can say

“No” in a socially graceful way, and if you want to accept someone’s invitation, you can always break an appointment with yourself, no one will be upset about that.

#3. Move your body, move your mind.

As you slowly adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it’s vital you get outside and move your body. Notice, I didn’t say “exercise,” since for some people that may sound daunting (What do I wear? What gym do I join? What are the elements of my workout?). No need to make it a big undertaking, you’re not training for the Olympics. So pick short, achievable goals, like a very short hike, a walk around the block, a bike ride to the park, etc. Keep these jaunts short, as this will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief. This is a great habit to form in the new year.

#4. Realize that you do not need to “understand” your grief, or fit your loss into your religious or philosophical worldview right now.

When I coached Little League, I established the One Minute Rule. It was this: If I, or any player, gets hit by a batter or thrown baseball, whatever the person hit by the ball says for the first minute after being hit, is OK. Screaming and accusations were common after being hit by the baseball, but everyone knew that you got a free pass for a minute. And they knew that after a minute the hit person had to be ready to move on. Well, bereaved people get a lot longer than a minute, or a month, or a year, to integrate their experience into the rest of their outlook on life. So don’t feel any anxiety about fully grasping what has happened to you. Time will help clear your mind, and you will eventually be able to cognitively address your loss, the pain it has brought you, and the changes in your life that have ensued.

#5. Decide that in the new year, you will, in some new way, begin to focus a bit more on others, as a part of your loved one’s legacy.

This is a valuable change you can make in your life. We all need to get out of our skin for a while, we need to get out of ourselves and just focus on other people, and their problems. Sometimes this helps us gain a fresh perspective on our own life. So plan on doing that this new year, and as you do it, you will no doubt talk with new people, and when the opportunity presents itself tell them about your loved one who has died. You don’t have to tell your loved one’s life story or anything like that, just mention them in passing, or say “My wife used to like to do this (activity).” You may feel a bit more comfortable talking about your loved one with people who didn’t know him or her, and it is very valuable to begin to talk out loud---in the past tense---about your loved one. It may be shocking for you to hear yourself speak out loud in the past tense about someone so close to you, but it will help you integrate their death into your life. Where

do you go to be around other people? Start with local civic groups, like the Boys and Girls Club, the Historical Society, the Kiwanis or Elks, the Library, Big Brothers and Sisters, a Habitat for Humanity project or a Rescue Mission.

#6. Listen to the Music.

A recent study I saw asserted that sad people who listen to their favorite music that matches their mood, report feeling better. Music is therapeutic and soothing. Throughout human religious and cultural history, music has been central to the expression of human values and sentiments. Sit down with a pen and paper, and make a short list of some songs of different types that you have always liked. Then go to youtube.com and search for them and listen to them, or go to the library and listen to them, or order them online (if you are not accustomed to doing that on a computer, ask a friend to do it for you). Just get the music playing so you can listen to it. And as you do, let your mind take you where it will---daydream---and after a while I'll bet you'll feel relaxed and even renewed.

#7. Wishing you well.

As the new year begins, write down what your loved one would want for you in the new year. Trouble imagining what that might be? It's probably the same as what you would wish for your loved one, had you been the one that died. So sit down at the computer, or put pen to paper, and make a list of five or seven or ten states of mind or attitudes or commodities that your loved one would want for you to attain as you move forward without them physically with you. For example, my mother would want me to look toward the future, and not be paralyzed by mourning. Or, my father would want me to be optimistic about what will happen to me this year, or my sister would want me to buy those expensive boots we used to talk about. And then, armed with your list, choose one of those dispositions or possessions and pursue it. Look back at your list after a few months, and check off the outlook or object you now have. Deliberately choose to achieve something your loved one would want you to have in this new year. By doing so, you will honor their memory.

So often, we think of grief or bereavement as something that happens to us, instead of something we do. This is unfortunate, since passivity and inaction will not help us to engage the new reality of loss in our lives. This is not to say that grief is a "problem" we can solve, or a "condition" we can hurry up and make go away, but it is to say that we can be active participants and even helpful agents in our own emotional well-being. By deliberately and purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. And this is a powerful choice to make as a new year and our new lives dawn.

Reprinted with permission from Grief Digest, Centering Corporation, Omaha, NE, 866-218-0101. October 2015

This Can Be a Constructive, if not a Happy Year

HAPPY NEW YEAR??? "How can it ever be again?" "How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?"

When we are hurting and so terribly depressed, it is hard to see any good in our new year, but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable, that we will some day feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we don't believe, we must say it to ourselves over and over again that IT IS TRUE, BECAUSE IT IS! Many parents whose children have died in the past will attest to this. Remember, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are now.

Second, we must face the New Year with the knowledge that this year offers us CHOICE-whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we choose to be on our way to healing by the following year, we must work to get there and that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief: to cry, to be angry, to talk about our guilt, to do whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Third, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. More importantly, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate, and aware of the real values in life. Let us not waste this New Year!!

~Margaret H Gerner, TCF, St. Louis, MO

***"Death ends a life,
Not a relationship."***

~ Robert Anderson

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.

I Am Spring

*I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.*

*I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly – embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests
where winged voices sing winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream
I whisper truth – life is change.*

*I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies
in deepest night
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.*

~ Carol Clum

(written after attending a workshop presented by John Fox, author of 'Finding What You Didn't Lose' and 'Poetic Medicine'.)

The holiest of all holidays
are those kept by ourselves,
silent and apart;

the secret anniversaries of the heart.



Valentine Message



*I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.*

*My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.*

*Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.*

*I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.*

*~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF Katy, TX
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen*

Holding Onto Love

*Trees and flowers seem suddenly reborn,
As another spring arrives fresh and new,
Surrounded by such beauty,
My thoughts turn to you.
As another college graduation looms,
Great excitement fills the air,
Glancing at the smiling students,
I still search for strawberry blonde hair,
No matter what I do in life
You are always there,
I feel your presence constantly,
As each new experience we share.
Though physically, you have left us,
Your love remains here to stay,
A bond so strong and nourishing,
It gets us through another day.*

~ Chuck Collins, TCF Burke/Springfield/Fairfax Chapter

Spring's Tears

When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the luminescent blue
A grim, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew.
Its golden glow upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun
Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are done.

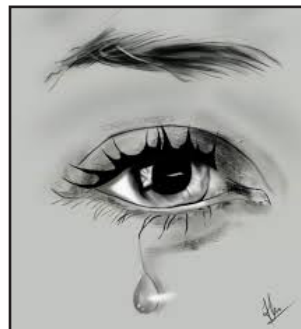
It is this vow of nature's of resurgence in the spring
That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks my suffering.

For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year
The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will reappear.

For nature has no power over death that holds you still,
And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil.
Oh, would that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face!
To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.

Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray, cold days are done?
Why mightn't YOU not live again to see spring's fresh new dawn
and feel the warmth of sunshine
relish in the greening earth...
to open arms, embracing life
why can't it be YOUR birth?

You were so young, your life so new when death crept in the door,
And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more
The reason why the earth's renewed when spring
comes 'round each year
Yet in your grave you're silent still,
and I
condemned
am here.



*~ Sally Migliaccio
TCF Babylon, NY
In Memory of Tracey*

When & How to Use Medicine for Grief

by Richard Dew, www.opentohope.com, September 14, 2009

(Dr. Richard Dew is a family practitioner in Oak Ridge, TN. His youngest son, Bradley, was 21 when he was murdered.)

It was a typical meeting of Compassionate Friends, the organization for parents who have lost a child. We were discussing what helped us cope with the death of our child. Joanna, a quiet lady who seldom spoke, suddenly blurted out, "I take Prozac. I couldn't have made it without it, and I don't care what anyone thinks." After a few seconds of stunned silence, several others confessed to "using drugs."

As a physician, I have been uneasy with what seems to be an almost blanket disapproval of medication by support groups, psychologists and counselors. We are encouraged to cry, scream, beat on pillows, journal, or whatever it takes to deal with our grief. Each must grieve in one's own way and that is okay, we are told. But, if one must take medication, there is a subtle, and often not so subtle, message that we are not grieving properly.

The great physician William Osler said, "the desire to take medicine is perhaps the greatest feature that distinguishes man from animals." Americans in particular seem to think that there is a chemical solution to every problem—too fat, take a pill—too thin, take a pill—can't sleep, take a pill—can't stay awake, take a pill—no energy, take a pill—hyperactive, take a pill.

While those groups mentioned above tend to condemn medication, doctors as a group have a propensity to prescribe too freely. Caution must be exercised in deciding whether or not medications are needed. Just as important, caution is needed in deciding what drug should be used when one is needed. (See Table 1.)

Most bereaved parents require no medication. However, some will undergo much unnecessary pain, and a few may not survive without it.

I have found it useful to think of depression in two categories: Situational Depression (SD) and Chemical Depression (CD). Most people with SD do very well without medication. On the other hand, CD usually requires medication as part of its treatment plan.

Situational Depression (SD) occurs in response to the stresses and losses we experience in life: divorce, loss of a job, children moving away, problem children,

death of a loved one, etc. Grief is a form of SD. From my own personal experience, I think the death of a child entails the severest form of SD. For this discussion, the terms SD and grief are interchangeable.

There are several cornerstones in coping with grief.

1. Make a decision that you will survive, no matter what.
2. Talk about and share your loss—over and over again. I found The Compassionate Friends invaluable for this.
3. An individual counselor is often helpful, but be sure that they are familiar with parental loss.
4. Grief work is that painful process of **intentional** preoccupation with your dead child. Perhaps just a little at a time at first, but you make yourself do it. If we are to survive the loss intact we must hold up the image of what was and review it in detail again and again. Talk about it. Study old picture albums and scrapbooks even though it hurts.
5. Get enough rest. Insomnia is a common companion of grief. The old standbys of a bedtime routine and a warm bath are helpful. Use medication for sleep with caution. Avoid benzodiazepines and alcohol entirely. Benadryl, trazadone, Remeron, and Ambien are safe but should not be used nightly and may leave you drowsy the next morning.
6. Physical activity---jogging or walking can burn off a lot of frustration.
7. Eat regularly but watch sugars and sweets. Too much of these can cause swings in blood sugar, which can affect mood and energy levels.
8. Spend some time alone each day. This is your time. Journal, read, cry, meditate or whatever gets you out of the daily hustle and bustle.
9. Do something social each day. Just as you need time alone, you also need human interaction. It doesn't have to be big—call a friend on the phone, have lunch with them or go for a walk with them.

Chemical Depression (CD) results from lowered levels of substances in the brain called neurotransmitters, primarily the chemicals serotonin and norepinephrine. It is generally believed that 10-15% of the population is genetically predisposed to CD. Bipolar disease is the best known form of CD. If the neurotransmitter level is low enough, deep, potentially suicidal depression may occur, often for no apparent reason. Those predisposed to CD may do well until something happens that lowers the neurotransmitter level. A classic example is the depression that results from taking certain types of blood pressure medicines or cortisone preparations. The hormones associated with pregnancy and delivery can trigger a chemically induced postpartum depression. More pertinent to us, the stress of the severe grief reaction and SD that accompanies the death of a child may bring on CD.

Medications used to treat CD serve to raise the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain. Unless a near normal level of these is restored, the depression will persist. To imply that "drugs are bad" and that if persons were only stronger or had more moral fiber, or worked hard enough, they should be able to overcome their depression, is wrong. It makes as much sense to tell diabetics, who are deficient in insulin, that if they were stronger and worked hard enough they would not need "drugs," i.e. insulin.

People who have had previous bouts of clinical

depression or have a strong history of depression in their family are more prone to CD. Many times, however, it is impossible to differentiate between a severe SD and a CD. Often a trial of antidepressant medication is the only way to tell. I will take 3-4 weeks to see if there is a response. I always caution my patients that antidepressants will not make you feel good. They make you feel more near whatever is normal for you. Unfortunately for bereaved parents that normal is the usual degree of SD that goes with grief. You don't feel good, but you're now in the same boat as the others in your group and you are more able to do your grief work and benefit from it.

It's important to remember that medication may be a necessary aid to recovery in a small percentage of bereaved parents, but, they, just like the rest of us, still must use the coping skills learned in TCF and utilize the previous suggestions for dealing with the SD that accompanies the death of a child. Medication may be a necessary aid, but it is only one part of the healing process.

One final observation: I have often heard medication referred to as a "crutch." Some may view it as such. But if a person can't get to TCF or their counselor because of a broken leg, would we deny them a crutch? The same goes for those unfortunate enough to have CD at the worst time of their lives.

Table 1

Medications to be avoided--Addictive, tend to make depression worse.

Alcohol--to be avoided when used as a medication, e.g., for sleep or to ease stress and anxiety and when drunk in larger quantities than previously.

Barbiturates (Nembutal, Seconal, Phenobarbital) -- older drugs, seldom used but extremely dangerous when used as sleep aids.

Medications to be used with caution--potentially addictive, may make depression worse.

Benzodiazepines--Xanax (alprazolam), Valium (diazepam), Ativan (lorazepam)

Librium (chlordiazepoxide), Klonopin (clonazepam). May be used for **short term** relief of anxiety and agitation.

Newer antidepressants--non-addictive, safe, generally have few side effects.

Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Wellbutrin, Effexor, Lexapro, Lamictal

Remeron and trazadone are often used as sleep aids and are safe and non-addictive.

Older antidepressants--non-addictive, significant side effects. May aggravate heart or prostate conditions. Used primarily when there is no response to the newer antidepressants.

Elavil (amitriptyline), Sinequan (doxepin), Norpramin (desipramine), Pamelor (nortriptyline)

Nardil and Parnate are a class of antidepressants that can have severe and potentially fatal side effects. Require extreme caution with other medications and diet. Should be used only under the supervision of a specialist familiar with their use.

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.