



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

ADVISORY BOARD - Topeka Chapter
Rev. Art Donnelly, Second Presbyterian Church
Chaplain Ty Petty, MDiv., L.S.D.C.S.W.
Colleen Ellis, L.S.C.W., Family Therapist
Donna Mathena-Menke, Funeral Director/Bereaved Parent
Donna Kidd, Bereaved Parent
Byron Waldy, Chaplain/Counselor

NEWSLETTER - Volume 4, Issue No. 1
The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
National Headquarters, P. O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free 877-969-0010; Fax (630) 990-0246

National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

January ~ February 2019
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629
(785) 272-4895

JANUARY MEETING

Monday, January 28, 2019
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

“Triggers”- Triggers are sights, words, events in our surroundings and daily activities that touch our grief and bring it to the surface in sometimes uncontrollable ways. Triggers can be memorabilia, places, objects, songs, smells, people, or anything that brings back memories. Let’s talk about what our “triggers” are, how they affect us, and how we handle them. Are our “triggers” always painful or do they sometimes bring pleasant memories to mind? This meeting will offer us the opportunity to discuss our “triggers” and they part they may play in our individual grief journeys.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 25, 2019
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Signs, Symbols & Dreams - At this month’s meeting we will have the chance to talk 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 deceased loved one. Sometimes dreams about our child can be comforting, sometimes unsettling. This meeting will offer us the opportunity to share any such events that have happened to us in an open and non-judgemental 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.

This newsletter is sponsored by:

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

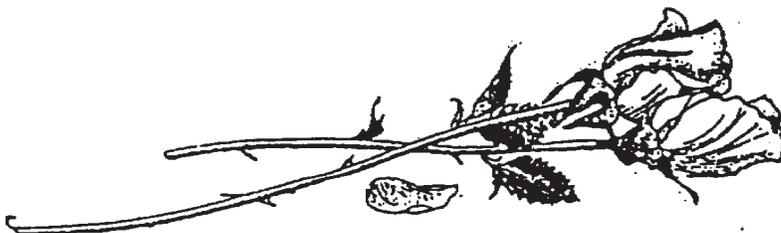
*Todd and Kathleen Williams in loving memory of their son,
Baby Boy Williams who was stillborn on February 23rd*



*"Hope"
is the thing
with feathers
that perches in the
soul
and sings the tune
without words
and never stops
-- at all.
--Emily Dickinson*

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.

Copyright ©2019 The Compassionate Friends
All rights reserved



We Need Not Walk Alone

From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

The year has turned, and somehow, despite our many misgivings, we have survived the holiday blitz that begins with Halloween, marches through Thanksgiving, drags us through Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanza. For those of you who are very new in your grief, the past few months may have just been a blur. For others, the constant reminders of the person missing at these holiday celebrations, may have made it difficult to fully participate. For those of us further along in our grief journey, the holidays, although bittersweet, may have a softer edge. Hopefully as time passes, these months from October-December will become easier to handle. Remember that your missing child, grandchild, or siblings is still there for you in the love you shared together. No months of frantic holiday hoopla can ever take that away.

So now that we come to 2019, where do we go from here? As the Darcie Sims article in the newsletter states, there are “Choice Points” in grief. The start of a new year is a good time to think about what choices you want to make for your life moving forward. Continue to be gentle and patient with yourself as you navigate this new “landscape without gravity”. Please believe that while time do not necessarily “heal all wounds”, it does have a way of softening the day-to-day impact of the loss you have suffered. Time will pass, but love and memories remain, now and always.

Time to Respond: You will find in this newsletter a **Renewal Form** that you will need to return if you wish to continue to receive this newsletter throughout 2019. We certainly want everyone who wants the newsletter to receive it. This form also offers you the opportunity to choose how you wish to receive the newsletter (printed or electronically). It also gives you the choice to sponsor a newsletter in your loved one’s memory, send a Love Gift in their memory, or to have them included in the We Remember portion of the newsletter in 2019. Please keep in mind that we are a nonprofit organization and charge no dues or fees to get this newsletter, participate in both support group meetings and memorial events, or to utilize the many resources we have in our Chapter Library. We need your support to help meet the expenses of the Topeka Chapter, so we hope you will help us out. You can also help support the Chapter by using your Dillions card when you buy your groceries. It costs you nothing and does not affect your fuel points. Look for information on how this works on the opposite page.

Meetings/Online Resources: We invite you to join us at a monthly support group meeting. We always have interesting topics related to grief to talk about, provide an opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings in a safe, non-judgemental setting, and a chance to talk about your child, grandchild or sibling. This group offers support and hope and we welcome you to join us. There is never any obligation to speak or participate in the discussion if you don’t care to do so; but much can be learned by listening to others who are walking this path. We also welcome suggestions on meeting topics you would like to see us explore. For those who cannot attend a regular meeting, we would encourage you to check out the TCF Private Facebook Pages or Online Communities on the National TCF website (www.compassionatefriends.org). These Pages cover all different kinds of loss/circumstances of death, etc. Since these are “closed” Facebook pages/Online Communities, you must register and be approved to participate by the page moderator and TCF. This process insures respect for your privacy and encourages open and honest discussion.

Until next time, be gentle with yourself and let the healing happen. Remember, You Need Not Walk Alone.

~ Susan Chan, Rachael’s Mom

We talk about them because we’re proud. We talk about them because they deserve to be remembered.

We talk about them because even though they are not physically with us, they are never far from our mind. We talk about them because they are part of us, a part that we could never ignore or disown.

We talk about them because we love them still and always will. Forever. Nothing will ever change that.

Scribbles & Crumbs

*The physical space that you used to occupy
Remains empty and tangible*

At every holiday

Vacation

Special occasions

Or quiet family time

Your absence is felt

Like a solid entity

I will honor

That space as

A constant reminder

Of the love that we

Continue to share

~ Tanya Lord, Grief Toolbox

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 each event. This is a directive from the National TCF Office to protect all TCF members. Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing list will be included in the We Remember section

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

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

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

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

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

Christian Kyle Charay, son of Alfred James Charay and Laurie Pelman; grandson of Jennie L. Charay, who died on February 27th



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

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

Evan Douglas Epoch, son of Nancy S. Epoch, born March 10th

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

John Carl Harrington, son of Mary Harrington died March 18th

Jaime M. Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, born and died February 3rd

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

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



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

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

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

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, who died on Feb. 21st

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

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

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



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

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

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 died on March 19th

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

(Use the form on opposite page 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.. This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for February and March)

GRIEF BURSTS

Question: My daughter died almost six years ago. It doesn't happen much now but every so often I see, hear or think of something that makes me remember her. It could be a favorite cereal in a commercial, someone who resembles her, or even hearing someone laugh like she did. When this happens I get this wave of desperation; I might start crying wherever I am. Isn't this unusual after so long a time?

Response: You will love and miss your daughter for the rest of your life. In her own way, despite death, she will have a place in your life. In that way, it makes perfect sense that you would remember her and experience her in many ways throughout your life, whether through seeing someone that reminds you of her, recalling the special way she laughed, or wanting to share a special event with her.

To remember her is to bring her back into the present and to give your sorrow expression. Each time you grieve you are also acknowledging the reality of her death and learning how to live without her. This process is the work of a lifetime and it is unrealistic, not helpful, and unhealthy to live as though we can "get over" such a profound loss quickly. Please give yourself the permission and the compassion to move through this painful journey at your own pace, in your own way, and with people who support you.

Grief therapists refer to what you are experiencing as a "STUG", or a Subsequent Temporary Upsurge of Grief. These are common and expected reactions to the death of a loved, even years after the death. In order to be helpful we must expect, allow for, appreciate, and encourage the expression of them. These healthy and understandable STUG reactions should not be misdiagnosed as "over reactions" or a pathological response to death. You may continue to experience these reactions on anniversary dates such as your daughter's birthday; during a particular season that she loved

most; as memory-based reactions when a place reminds you of her; or from a music-elicited reaction when the words or melody elicit feelings about your daughter.

Your mourning will become less intense and frequent over time. But mourning is never truly over because of new life situations. For example, a different experience of your grief may arise as your friend plans for a daughter's wedding and you grieve for an event that you will not be able to share with your daughter. Grief and mourning fluctuate over time as your issues, concerns, and reactions change throughout your lifetime.

Rather than think of your grief as unusual, perhaps you can acknowledge your feelings as an opportunity to visit with the memory of your daughter. You continue to love her, think of her, and carry her with you in your heart. Use these "waves of desperation" as an invitation to yourself to create a ritual that will allow you to spend time thinking of her: writing in a special journal, creating art or music that reminds you of her, or passing to others the lessons you have learned may turn these difficult times into meaningful passage.

Source: <http://www.healingthespirit.org/grief-bursts/>

The reality is that we don't forget, move on,
and have closure, but rather
we honor, we remember, and
incorporate our deceased children and siblings
into our lives in a new way.
In fact, *keeping memories of your loved one alive*
in your mind and in your heart
is an important part of your healing journey.
~ Harriet Schiff, author of The Bereaved Parent

(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 the We Remember section of this newsletter, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email the information to chanx2@cox.net We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those parents requesting it. If you have previously submitted your child's information and it has appeared in the newsletter during the past year, you **do not** need to resubmit it. If you have just begun receiving this newsletter, or have never submitted this information, you will need to do so in order for it to be included. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____ Son ___ Daughter ___ Grandchild ___ Brother ___ Sister ___

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Father _____ Mother _____

Note: Please list your address and phone number. 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

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>.

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.

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.



TCF National Page (open group)
<https://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA/>

Los Amigos Compasivos/USA
<https://www.facebook.com/LACUSA/>

TCF Private Facebook Groups
<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>

Loss of a Child
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/407123299460580/>

Sounds of the Siblings (bereaved siblings only)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/>

Loss of a Grandchild
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759177998317/>

Sign up for Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

TCF National Magazine

***We Need Not Walk Alone* Available Free Online**

The Compassionate Friends national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®, is available for free online. The magazine remains available in print free with any patron donation or when ordered by paid subscription through TCF's online store.

We Need Not Walk Alone provides comfort and support to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents through stories, poems, advice columns, and much more. It has been referred to as "a support group in print" and is published three times a year.

Sign-up for a free online subscription through our website, compassionatefriends.org. It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use.

Choice Points in Your Grief

By the late Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS

Bereaved Parent and Grief Guru to So Many in the TCF Family

We have always had choices in our lives:

- Should I smile or cry now?
- Which thumb to suck?
- Which shoe to lose?
- Who will be my best friend?
- Who will be my second best friend?
- Which to eat first...dessert or the vegetable?
- Which one to fall in love with?
- Who to marry?
- How many children to have?
- What will we name them?



And then, one day, we ran out of choices or so we thought. Our world came to pieces and the sky grew dark and the sun went out. But even then, in the darkest moments that we have ever known, there were choices to be made...even if we did not recognize them. From the moment we learned of the death, there were choices to be made.

- Should I continue breathing?
- Who needs to be notified?
- Which funeral home to use?
- Burial or cremation?
- Which clothes, music, readings?
- Who will do what?
- Should I continue breathing?

In a world where there are no choices to be made, we are faced with countless ones that are required. Yet there is simply no energy, no brainpower and no motivation to make any of them. We would prefer to lie down and die. Some of us even tried, but it didn't work, so we got up, dusted ourselves off, got busy, made coffee, tossed in a load of laundry and began to move forward into grief...a world filled with choices we did not want to make!

In the early hours, days, weeks and even months of grief, our choices are pretty basic and limited. We plod through the fog, frozen as icicles or Popsicles, functioning but not feeling. It is early grief and fortunately the choices are pretty basic.

- Should we eat?
- Should I go to work?
- Should I pay the bills?
- Should I keep breathing?

But as grief progresses, our choices begin to become more complex.

- What should we do with the stuff?
- What do we do with the room?
- Should I keep breathing?
- Should we move, stay married, hide?
- What do we tell everyone when they ask how we are?
- Why are we still breathing?

Eventually grief settles down into a routine, of sorts—a new normal for us—but still there are choices to be made.

- Should we go to a support group?
- Should I make him/her go with me?
- How should we memorize our child, grandchild?
- How long should we be grieving?
- Can we move on, get over it or stay in sadness forever?

And, finally, what should we bring with us into our new lives?

- Bitterness
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Joy
- Hate
- Sorrow
- Pain first
- Pain always



As you wrestle long and hard, you finally discover the awful truth of grief: your loved one has died, but you have not. You are left among the living, to carve out an existence that has to endure not only the pains of life, but the joys as well. And suddenly, survival isn't enough. If you are to be stuck in life, then you can choose to live again.

We can choose how we will allow grief to influence us; we can carry bitterness and anger or we can choose to remember light and love. We rearrange the furniture, change rooms, sometimes we even move. The room becomes a den, a sewing room, a guest room or perhaps someone else's room. Slowly, we begin to understand that putting things away does not mean putting our love for them out of our lives.

Then, there is a fork in the road...a choice point between grieving forever, or learning to live with what you got instead of what you wanted. You don't have to remember only the awfulness of the death; you can choose to recall the joys, the light your loved one brought, the music of his presence in your life.

These are the "Choice Points" in Grief

- What you will remember
- What you will carry with you
- What you will let go
- Whether to always carry the hurt, the guilt, the bitterness, the anger.
- Whether to decide to embrace joy, love, laughter, life.
- Whether to let the death overshadow the life?

If you didn't get to say, "Goodbye," you can say, "I love you" right now, tonight, and forever. You don't stop loving someone just because they died. What will you decide to remember first: the death or the life?

You can decide to look for joy and carry "rose-colored glasses," or you can choose to carry pain and sorrow forever. You can risk it all, without waiting for anything anymore; you can just start dancing. Even if there seems to be no light, our memories can light the way. No one can take away our memories. We can toss them away or give them away, but no one else can destroy those precious moments of light. They will last forever.

Love is the size of a sigh

Light as a kiss

Gentle as a whisper

Small as a moment in time

I am glad I bought the ticket. I'm glad I paid the price. I am glad I shared the journey and I still have a memento or two from the ride, but I choose to let go of the hurt so there is room for love to grow. I choose to remember the life, not just the death. I think the truly bereaved are those who have never known love at all. You and I are rich beyond measure because someone loved us and we loved them...we still do. And for this I am thankful.

***Grief isn't a seasonal song; it's a lifetime song,
but it doesn't have to be a sad song forever.
Our loved ones lived; we loved them; we still do.
I choose joy and thanks for the little while***

You can shed tears because they are gone, or you can smile because they lived. You can close your eyes and pray they will come back, or you can open your eyes and see all that they left for you. Your heart can be empty because you can't see them, or you can be full of the love you shared. You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday, or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday. You can remember only that they are gone, or you can cherish their memory and let it live on. You can cry and close your mind and feel empty, or you can do what they would want. Smile, Open your heart, Love... and go on.

—Elizabeth Ammons
lessonslearnedinlife.com



My Legacy

I want to leave you something.
Something much better than words or sounds. Look for me in the people I've known and loved or helped in some special way.

Let me live in your heart as well as your mind. You can love me most by letting your love reach out to our loved ones, by embracing them and living in their love.

Love does not die, people do.

So, when all that's left of me is love, give me away as best you can.

- Author Unknown

from:<http://www.acor.org/ped-onc/timetogo/writings.html>

Wearing My Shoes

I am wearing a pair of shoes. They are ugly shoes, uncomfortable shoes. I hate my shoes. Each day I wear them and each day I wish I had another pair. Some days my shoes hurt so bad that I do not think I can take another step. Yet I continue to wear them. I get funny looks wearing these shoes, they are looks of sympathy. I can tell in other's eyes that they are glad they are my shoes and not theirs. They never talk about my shoes. To learn how awful my shoes are might make them uncomfortable.

To truly understand these shoes you must walk in them. But once you put them on you can never take them off. I now realize that I am not the only one who wears these shoes. There are many pairs in this world. Some women are like me and ache daily as they try and walk in them. Some have learned how to walk in them so they don't hurt quite as much. Some have worn the shoes so long that days will go by before they think about how much they hurt.

No woman deserves to wear these shoes. Yet because of these shoes I am a stronger woman. These shoes have given me the strength to face anything. They have made me who I am. I will forever walk in the shoes of a woman who has lost a child.

~Author Unknown

Editor's Note: Though this statement has no known author, I am sure we all can recognize and understand its meaningful and poignant words.

Our time
on earth is a school.
Grief is the toughest class
we have to take.

-author unknown



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



The Keepers

You make friends because you have things in common.
We are friends because of our children.
The older ones, the younger ones, the ones who never
even had a chance to breathe.
They are our reason for being. . .
our heartbeat, our life's blood.

Whether we have lots of memories or only a few,
we are joined by an unbreakable bond.

We are the ones left behind, to remember and carry
the torch for those we remember so lovingly.

We are there for ourselves and each other . . .because
we understand the pain of loss.

We must also be there for those who, unfortunately,
join our ranks . . .
because we are the parents of lost children,
the bruised hearts, the keepers of memories.

~ Cheryl Pelletier, TCF, Concord, New Hampshire

Some Things You Need to Know

1. Grief Waits. If you put it away and try to ignore it, it will simply wait until you have no choice but to experience it.
2. We grieve as intensely as we love.
3. There is no "normal" in grieving.
4. You will never be the same person you were before your loss.
5. You must make a conscious decision to "heal".
6. There is no set-in-concrete stages or timelines in grief.
7. It is typical to feel almost numb for the first few months. When that "fog" lifts, it can be very frightening. Think of it as a wave and ride it out.
8. Losing a child is "out of order. Talking to and being with other bereaved parents can be extremely helpful.
9. Other people will not necessarily understand your grief unless you share it with them.
10. It is okay to talk about your child as long as you want.
11. It is okay to keep their belongings as long as you want.
12. It is okay to include them in celebrations and special occasions for as long as you want.
13. Finding "closure" is not a requirement for healing. For most parents, it is not even an option.
14. Even in death . . . love remains.

~ Sandy Goodman

REMINDER

Did you wake up in the morning
with tears in your heart?
And did you say to yourself
"I should not feel like crying
not like this, every morning?"

But you do know the truth, don't you?
When life deals us such a tragic blow,
such enormous damage,
We need many mornings to recover.
We need more than a few moments to heal.

Take for yourself the grace
of one quiet healing-step at a time.
Trying to rush the work of grief,
will slow down your renewal.

You only need to remember
that you will recover some day.
You only need to remember
that we all have our own pace,
and we all move in our own measure.
Healing takes time.

~ Sascha Wagner, TCF Poet Emeritus

“The Forgotten Griever” Our children who grieve the loss of a Sibling

An essay by Caroline Flohr, mother of Sarah Anne Gillette,
Author of *Heaven's Child*, TCF Silverdale, WA

Two weeks after my 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, died, I found a newsletter from my local Compassionate Friends Chapter in my mailbox. Before Sarah's accident, I didn't know who Compassionate Friends were. Eight years later, I know them well. So when the request came to speak to a local chapter about “The Forgotten Griever,” our children who grieve the death of a sibling, that was a topic near to my heart. I had overlooked my son's grief when his sister died. Fortunately, not too much time had passed. I put pen to paper and began writing...

The sibling bond is often overlooked when a sibling dies...and siblings do have a very special relationship. When considering grief, it's the familial relationship least studied. It's most unfortunate because our children who live often become the “forgotten griever.” And yet, just like us, their lives are not the same because relationships change when a child dies.

Losing a sibling has a special grief all its own. It's as if they've lost part of their past and their future. When one child dies, the surviving sibling must grow up faster than anyone should, losing the innocence of childhood. Most often they find themselves in a new role—taking care of others, and their identity is gone. Sometimes they feel they've lost their parents to the overwhelming grief because we, as parents, do not function as before our child died. And watching us grieve can be harder than their own grief.

Unbeknownst to us, fear sets in and consumes their thoughts. Will someone else they love die? Loneliness can overwhelm with the realization that there is no shared future, only memories to recall. And often times, friends do not know how to respond. When an important event occurs, the grief gets reprocessed. It comes back in waves. Anxiety, panic attacks, sleeping issues, and depression are common. Medication and sleeping aids can help. Sleep is very important in the healing process.

Suicidal thoughts are not far away. Isolation from the lack of attention and support can also lead surviving siblings down this path. They may want to be with their sibling again. Some will attempt suicide at least once. But thankfully, lingering in the back of minds is the hurt it would inflict on parents and others they love. Professional therapy can help, if the sibling is open and willing. Sometimes the surviving sibling just needs someone to talk to. Sometimes the therapist can offer insight that their feelings are normal. Sometimes therapy isn't productive. And that's okay. Or maybe the child who lives believes that Heaven awaits them, where their sibling now is. In either case, hopefully the attachment to immediate family awakens and strengthens with more appreciation, openness and love.

In the early days, if possible, focus on your children who live. Children are often more resilient than us. As I found my daughter, Sarah, alive within, I discovered more grace to confront my own grief. And as I watched my surviving children navigate their days with more depth and return to the joys and pleasures of life

before their sibling's death, then my daily routine became more manageable.

Just as we find ourselves struck with denial, anger, guilt, and regrets, so do our children who live. I learned from my children who live that these three actions were most important to them when grief set in.

- LISTEN...because I will hear.
- BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT and PATIENT. I cannot eliminate their pain. But my presence and my caring response let them know that they are not alone. I schedule one-on-one time with each of my children just as I schedule a date with a friend. I am learning to truly embrace their unique qualities.
- SAY THE NAME OF THE DECEASED SIBLING frequently. I weave Sarah's name into everyday conversation. It lets my family know that Sarah is not forgotten. We share stories and memories. I am learning to keep communication open. I ask my children to be open to signs from their sister. Those signs offer great comfort.

Each of us grieves, and each griever must find his own way. Grief doesn't necessarily coincide with any stages. We must honor the uniqueness of grief. It's a life-long process of jumping back and forth and every place in between. And when in our darkest moments, look to the love and spirit of our children who live. I have found that the love and resilience of my four children who live heals and strengthens me in ways I'd never known before my daughter, Sarah, died. Today we all walk together.

Remember Me . . .



Remember me in quiet days
When raindrops whisper on your pane.
But in your memories have not grief
Let just the joy we knew remain.

Remember me when evening stars
Look down on you with steadfast eyes.
And when your thoughts do turn to me,
Know that I would not have you cry,
But live for me and laugh for me --
When you are happy, so am I.

Remember an old joke we shared,
Remember me when Spring walks by.
Think of me when you are glad,
And while you live, I shall not die.

~ Lyn Bryant, Sibling, TCF, Baytown, Texas

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 and siblings.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
AT TOPEKA, KS
PERMIT # 547

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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.