



# The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

*Published Quarterly by The Topeka TCF Chapter*

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National TCF Website:  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:  
[www.tcftopeka.org](http://www.tcftopeka.org)

July ~ Aug ~ Sept 2021  
Editor: Susan Chan  
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66614-3629

**REMINDER: Because the Formation Center will be closed for maintenance during July, our July meeting will be in the St. Vincent's Center which is in the basement of the building south of our regular meeting building across the larger parking lot.**

## JULY MEETING

Monday, July 26, 2021  
Most Pur Heart of Mary Church  
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS  
7 - 8:30 p.m.

**I've Always Wanted to Ask That** - This meeting offers us the opportunity to ask questions that perhaps we had always wondered about in grief. We will have some Support Card Questions to get us started, but we would like everyone to have the opportunity to ask questions, discuss possible ways to deal with difficult situations, ask for suggestions on grief-related topics, etc. It is sometime very helpful to seek input from those farther down the road in their grief when you may be very new to this experience. Let's talk!

## AUGUST MEETING

Monday, August 23, 2021  
Most Pur Heart of Mary Church  
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS  
7 - 8:30 p.m.

**The New Me, How My Child's Death Changed Me** - It is a singularly true statement that after the death of our child we will never be the same person again. But who is this "new" person? How has my child's death changed my self-image of who I am? Have the things my child "taught" me during their life, changed me into who I am today? Are these changes for the better? Has it changed how I deal with other people and situations? Can I accept who the "new" me has become?

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

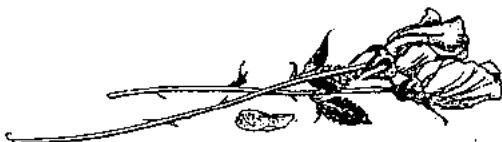
Monday, September 27, 2021  
Most Pur Heart of Mary Church  
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS  
7 - 8:30 p.m.

**Good Grief Rituals** - Many parents have found that having rituals to incorporate as part of special days (birthdays, death anniversaries, etc.) have been helpful to them in getting through these especially emotionally daunting days. We will discuss why people have rituals, what constitutes a ritual, what makes a ritual meaningful and ideas for rituals to use in remembering and memorializing your child. Group members are invited to share the rituals they have found meaningful and helpful to them.

*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](http://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***

*Don & Susan Arnold in loving memory of their son  
Matthew Arnold who was born on July 28<sup>th</sup>*

*Duane & Mary Eberhardt in loving memory of their son  
Jerry Eberhardt who was born on September 1<sup>st</sup>*

*Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter  
Teresa Jenkins Carson who died on June 17<sup>th</sup>*

*Penny Lumpkin in loving memory of her son  
William Henry "Hank" Lumpkin who died August 19<sup>th</sup>*

*Linda Marling in loving memory of her granddaughter  
Morgan Marie Pollak who was born on  
August 14<sup>th</sup> and died on August 27<sup>th</sup>*

*Tom & Barbara Rush in loving memory of their daughter  
Katie Rush who was born on July 6<sup>th</sup>*

*Mike & Valerie Self in loving memory of their son  
Nathaniel "Nate" Self who died on August 10<sup>th</sup>*

### ***Please Note:***

**If you wish to sponsor the next newsletter  
(October ~ November ~ December 2021)  
we must receive your information and \$30.00  
check by September 1, 2021. Make checks payable to:  
Topeka TCF Chapter**



### ***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](mailto: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.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Pozez Center (north side of Stormont Vail). Contact Information: Sandy Reams 785-249-3792 or email [TopekaHeals@gmail.com](mailto:TopekaHeals@gmail.com)

**Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group** - Meets 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 [lrosen@stormontvail.org](mailto:lrosen@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>.

Death has taught me how to live with  
more intention.

Grief has taught me about resilience.  
Here, I've learned to trust that even  
when I break, I can put my pieces back  
together again and again.

Love has shown me that it can  
transcend even our physical bodies.  
Love is the thread that keeps me  
connected to what matters in my life.

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# 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:

- ♥ Ron & Jan Ash in loving memory of their daughter Wendy J. Ash-Long who was born on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and died on August 5<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Dick & Janie Elliott in loving memory of their daughter Amy Elliott Smith who was born on September 18<sup>th</sup> and died on July 6<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Joe & Melody Engell in loving memory of their son Caleb Zachary Engell who was born on August 6<sup>th</sup> and died on August 15<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Mary Harrington in loving memory of her daughters Juliet Faith Harrington who was born on September 2<sup>nd</sup> and died on August 25<sup>th</sup>; and Clara Harrington-Jones who was born and died on August 26<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter Teresa Jenkins Carson who was born on April 7<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Mike & Valerie Self in loving memory of their son Nathaniel "Nate" Self who died on August 10<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Gary & Marge Thompson in loving memory of their daughter Sharis Thompson Meyer who was born on September 15<sup>th</sup> and died on August 25<sup>th</sup>

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".

## **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](http://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 you 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 the printing cost of this newsletter.

**TCF National Office e-mail:**  
[nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

**Compassionate Friends web address:**  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Topeka TCF Chapter web and e-mail addresses:**  
[www.tcftopeka.org](http://www.tcftopeka.org)    [tcftopeka@gmail.com](mailto:tcftopeka@gmail.com)

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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.*

### *JULY ~*

Matthew Wayne Arnold, son of Don and Susan Arnold, who was born on July 28<sup>th</sup>

Wendy J. Ash-Long, daughter of Ron and Jan Ash, who was born on July 13<sup>th</sup>

Diane Joy Bandstra, daughter of Bert and Elaine Bandstra, who died on July 28<sup>th</sup>

Matthew Brown, son of Joe and Heather Brown, who was born on July 2nd and died on July 1<sup>st</sup>

Amber Fler, daughter of Darla Hughes and Terry Fler, who died on July 7<sup>th</sup>

Andrew Garrett Lindeen, grandson of Mary J. Lindeen, who died on July 29<sup>th</sup>

Christen (Chris) Edward Locke, son of Alfonzo E. Locke Jr. and Sheila D. Locke, who died on July 5<sup>th</sup>

Amy Lundin, daughter of Ralph and Judy Lundin, who died on July 28<sup>th</sup>

Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, who was born on July 26<sup>th</sup>

Sarah N. Rice, daughter of Gary and Peggy Rice, who was born on July 19<sup>th</sup>

Pamela Jaye (Luthye) Rodriguez, daughter of the late Dale Luthye and Elma Luthye, who was born on July 28<sup>th</sup>

Kathryn (Katie) Rush, daughter of Thomas and Barbara Rush, who was born on July 6<sup>th</sup>

Amy Elliott Smith, daughter of Dick and Janie Elliott, who died on July 6<sup>th</sup>

Rachel Diana Sowers, daughter of Bill and Diana Sowers, who was born on July 30<sup>th</sup>

Eric Edward Gordon Wiebler, son of David and Laura Wiebler, who died on July 12<sup>th</sup>

Tony Willey, son of Diana Willey, who was born on July 3<sup>rd</sup>

### *AUGUST ~*

Wendy J. Ash-Long, daughter of Ron and Jan Ash, who died on August 5<sup>th</sup>

Kevin Lee Cronister, son of Richard and Judy Cronister, who was born on August 8<sup>th</sup>

Wendi Sue Cushing, daughter of Scott and Denise Cushing; sister of Deana and Dylan Cushing, who died on August 9<sup>th</sup>

Kimberly Melissa Dickinson, daughter of Curtis and Debbi Dickinson, who was stillborn on August 25<sup>th</sup>

Caleb Zachary Engell, son of Joe and Melody Engell, who was born on August 6<sup>th</sup> and died on August 15<sup>th</sup>

Clara Harrington Jones, daughter of Mary Harrington and John Jones, who was born and died on August 26<sup>th</sup>

Joel Andrew Knight, son of Jim and Gloria Knight, who died on August 23<sup>rd</sup>

William Henry "Hank" Lumpkin, son of Joe and Penny Lumpkin, who died on August 19<sup>th</sup>

Sharis Thompson Meyer, daughter of Gary and Margaret Thompson, who died on August 25<sup>th</sup>

Robin Lynn Paulson, daughter of Frank and Brenda Bissey and sister of Brad Bissey, and Greg Lee Paulson, son-in-law of Frank and Brenda Bissey and brother-in-law of Brad Bissey, who both died on August 27<sup>th</sup>

Morgan Marie Pollak, daughter of David and Shelley Pollak; granddaughter of Mark and Linda Marling, who was born on August 14<sup>th</sup> and died on August 27<sup>th</sup>

Nathaniel "Nate" Self, son of Mike and Valerie Self, who died on August 10<sup>th</sup>

Brandon Toler, son of Marty Tyson, who was born on August 18<sup>th</sup>

### *SEPTEMBER ~*

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, who was born on September 17<sup>th</sup>

Christian K. Charay, son of Alfred Charay and Laurie Charay who was born on September 30<sup>th</sup>

Ashley Brooke Dickinson, daughter of Curtis and Debbi Dickinson, who was stillborn on September 3<sup>rd</sup>



Gerald (Jerry) Eberhardt, son of Duane and Mary Eberhardt, who was born on September 1<sup>st</sup>

Amber Fleer, daughter of Darla Hughes and Terry Fleer, who was born on September 21<sup>st</sup>

Juliet Faith Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, who was born on September 2<sup>nd</sup>; and died on August 25<sup>th</sup>

Spencer Mark Hastings, son of Steve and Sue Hastings, who died on September 28<sup>th</sup>

Tara Kelly, daughter of Carrie Kelly, who was born on September 20<sup>th</sup>

Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, who born on September 14<sup>th</sup>

Sharis Thompson Meyer, daughter of Gary and Margaret Thompson, who was born on September 15<sup>th</sup>

Gregg W. Scott, son of Garry and Jo Scott, who was born on September 11<sup>th</sup>

Amy Elliott Smith, daughter of Dick and Janie Elliott, who was born on September 18<sup>th</sup>

Cory Sprecker, brother of Chelsea Sprecker, who died on September 26<sup>th</sup>

Keith Strathman, son of Don and Julie Strathman, brother of Becky Strathman, who was born on September 10<sup>th</sup>

Dawn Lee Wilson, daughter of Don J. and Dixie Lee Wilson, who was born on September 19<sup>th</sup>

## Dwelling on Our Loss

To an outsider, the idea of meeting with a group of people for the purpose of discussing death, our personal experiences with the death of our children, the "grief process," etc., may seem grim if not altogether morbid. All of us who are involved in The Compassionate Friends have run into someone who has asked, "Why do you do this?" or "Why don't you just try to let it go?"

The idea of "dwelling on the loss" is always stated with negative connotations, yet dwelling on the death of a child is not something we can avoid. Indeed, "dwelling" is part of the healing process. It's how we come to grips with the questions "Why, what if...?" that uncontrollably pop up in our minds, and it is how we learn to accept the unacceptable. Certainly, there is a wealth of information in books dealing with death and dying. Our faith, our pastors, priests, and rabbis have much to contribute to our healing. Psychologists, psychiatrists and therapy may be necessary.

The Compassionate Friends encourages grieving parents to utilize any or all of the above tools, but we also realize the value of learning to verbalize, openly, publicly, the grief and the loss we feel.....not in the privacy of our doctor or minister's office, where we are very sheltered, but openly among people who know full well how hard it is to say, "My child is dead." We do not put any pressure on people attending our meeting to say anything, but the beautiful part of this group is that it enables you to see people who are "down the long road" a way further and to realize that you will be there in time.

Are we dwelling on our loss? Absolutely. But we are learning to dwell on it constructively, to dwell on it without guilt and without the isolation we have all felt. We learn how to reach out (in time) to others with a compassion that brings healing to others as well as to ourselves.

~ Philip Barker - TCF, California

*(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 Chsn, 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**

# 16 Tips for Continuing Bonds with People We've Lost

*Understanding Grief: Litsa Williams*  
*www.whatsyourgrief.com*

With decades of grief theory that focused on closure, acceptance, and moving on, it is no wonder that so many grieverers feel self-conscious about maintaining ties with their deceased loved one after a certain period of time. Many now believe that healthy grief involves finding a new and different relationship with the person who died.

If you love the continuing bonds theory (which we know many of you do!) you may be looking for ways to continue bonds with your loved one. Some may be things you hadn't thought about, many may be things you already do but thought meant your grief was unhealthy or you weren't 'moving on' like you should. Either way, hopefully, you will find some tips on our list that resonate with you.

## 1. Talk to them

Really! It's okay – it doesn't mean you're crazy! The fact that we don't have a post about this is mind-boggling to me because talking to a loved one who died is something we certainly do, it is something many (dare I say most?) grieverers do, and it can bring a lot of comfort during the moments you miss them most. So talk away – be it out loud or in your head, this is a common way we continue a relationship with your loved one.

## 2. Write letters to the person you lost.

This is something you can do in a journal, on the computer, or in actual letters. There is an online resource to make writing even easier for you called AfterTalk ([www.aftertalk.com](http://www.aftertalk.com)) where you can write privately to loved ones using their interactive writing tools. You can do it weekly, monthly, annually... whatever works for you. You can keep the letters or you can get rid of them. If you choose the latter and you have physical letters, you can do it in creative ways – you can tear them up and collage with them, paint over them in an art journal, or whatever else works for you. No matter where you write them or what you do with them, these letters keep you connected with your loved one in the present.

## 3. Keep photos of the person around.

This may seem absurdly obvious, but there will be people who make you feel uncomfortable about keeping photos. For example, a woman who wrote in to Ask Amy expressing concern that her widowed boyfriend still had pictures of his wife around. She didn't ask our opinion, but luckily we decided to share what we thought anyway. Keeping photos around keeps us connected with our loved one and often helps us remember the ways that person continues to influence our lives.

## 4. Incorporate your loved one into events and special days.

Consider leaving an empty chair at holiday meals to honor your loved one, or using one of our 18 other suggestions (see <https://whatsyourgrief.com/ways-to-remember-your-loved-ones-during-the-holidays>). Discuss as a family other ways that you may want to involve your loved one's memory at special events. You will certainly be thinking of them on these big days, so there is no reason to keep that inside if you want to find a more open way to involve your loved one in the event.

## 5. Imagine what advice they would give you when making tough decisions.

Big decisions are often overwhelming and when you have lost the person who you would have talked it over with it can be especially hard. Imagining a conversation with them, what they would have said, and the advice they might have given can help us feel connected and also help make big life choices a little easier.

## 6. Talk about them with new people, who never got to know your loved one.

There will often be new and important people in your life who did not know your loved one. It may be new friends, a significant other, or children, who never had the opportunity to meet your loved one when they were alive. Find ways to tell new people about your loved one, sharing stories or photos. This is a way that your loved one's legacy continues and you continue to keep them in your life as you move forward.

## 7. Live your life in a way you know they would be proud of.

Be it a spouse, a parent, grandparent, child, or friend, we often struggle knowing our loved one won't be there for accomplishments and milestones. Taking time to recognize that your loved one would be proud of you for a specific accomplishment can be comforting and remind us how we continue to be connected to our loved one.

## 8. Finish a project they were working on.

Be it a project around the house, a piece of artwork, a team they coached, or a volunteer project they were involved in, consider picking up where they left off. This can help you learn new things about your loved one, continue your connection with them in the present, and continue their legacy.

## 9. Take a trip they always wanted to take.

Though this one may sound depressing, I have known many grieverers who have found comfort in this. Death can make us realize that life is short. We may ourselves be feeling inspired to travel and this can help us travel in a way that is meaningful in our grief. On trips like this, we may feel close to our loved one, imagining how they would have felt about the trip. It can be tough, certainly bittersweet, but for some people comforting. A great example of this is the movie "The Way".

## 10. Keep up their Facebook page.

This is more and more common and Facebook has even got the process in place to support it. You can request a memorialization page through Facebook Help Center. Keeping up a Facebook page allows the person's friends to keep interacting on their wall, keeping an ongoing relationship with the person.

**11. Adopt a hobby that they enjoyed.** This one may push you out of your comfort zone, but if they loved to knit, learn to knit. If they loved to garden, learn to garden. It may not end up being the right fit for you, but either way, people often feel a closeness with their loved one in the process.

## 12. Create a Dear Photograph.

Eleanor wrote a great post about Dear Photograph, a way to take a photo from the past and capture it in the present. She created her own, which you should absolutely check out! (See <https://whatsyourgrief.com/dear-photograph-old-memories-new-time/>) It can be a powerful symbolic reminder of the ways our loved ones still impact us in the present.

## 13. Plan for the anniversary.

Though it may feel like everyone else has moved on, you should not feel embarrassed or self-conscious about planning something in memory of your loved one each year on the anniversary of their death, or another special day. Be it a small, personal ritual or a large event, find something that works for you. Check out our 30 suggestions for the anniversary of your loved one's death here: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/dealing-with-the-anniversary-of-a-loved-ones-death/>.

## 14. Keep something that belonged to your loved one.

You can't keep everything (even though sometimes it is very hard to part with items!) but keep a few meaningful items can be extremely powerful. This could be an item they owned or an item they gave you. Either way, there can be comfort found in these items, as they make us feel close to our loved one. Of note, there is a study floating around out there that says keeping belongings can cause increased sadness. This has not been my personal experience, nor is it the experience of many griever I have worked with, which is why I have included it. It may not be ideal for everyone.

## 15. Enjoy comfort foods.

In this case, comfort foods are foods that remind you of your loved one. Making a recipe your loved one always made, or eating one of your loved one's favorite foods can bring back great memories and continue to connect us to our loved ones in everyday activities, like cooking and eating. I tried to make grandmother's holiday cookies (and epically failed), but I did succeed in making my dad's favorite cake.

## 16. Experience your loved one's presence.

It is common to feel the presence of your loved one – it may just be a feeling, it may be a specific type of wind or bird or countless other things that seem to be a sign of our loved one's presence. Unlike the studies about keeping something that belonged to your loved one, feeling your loved one's presence has been shown in studies to ease the sadness that accompanies grief. So when you feel your loved one's presence, feel it without apology or any worry that you are crazy! This is a normal and helpful way we continue bonds with our loved ones.

Source: [whatsyourgrief.com/continuingbonds](https://whatsyourgrief.com/continuingbonds)

(Editor's Note: The website *WhatsYourGrief* has many wonderful articles about all aspects of grief and loss and is a real community for those who are grieving. You might want to check it out.)

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

~ Robert Anderson

*"Proactive Grieving is a journey of self-discovery; we find ourselves broken and we soon realize that all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put us back together again; we cannot fix grief. If something cannot be fixed we toss it out, put it on a shelf, or we re-purpose it. There are some who do not survive a significant loss in their lives, there are many who sit broken on the shelf, and for others there can be a transformation so powerful it can change the world. Proactive grieving is utilizing the transformational power of grief to re-purpose our lives. To turn our loss into legacy that not only honors our loved one who died, but celebrates their life and seduces joy back into ours. We are human and we can carry both joy and sorrow simultaneously."*

~ Mitch Carmody, [www.Heartlightstudios.com](http://www.Heartlightstudios.com)

## SUMMER THOUGHT

Summer is here, with its healing sun, sweet green grass, growing gardens and all the birds singing. Why is it I am not feeling the usual singing heart summer always brought? I know the answer. . .my child isn't here to bask in the sun, smell the grass, raid the garden or listen to the birds. He was always the first to go barefoot, first to find a carrot big enough to eat, first to find where the oriole had nested. It is bittersweet to hear the orioles now. . .singing as beautifully as ever but my son can no longer hear the song. Still I hear the song and part of my son comes to touch me, to sit on the step and try to spot the flash of orange in the tree top. I find the orange and hear my son, "There he is! In the tall spruce next to the elm! See him!" He loved the birds, and with the birds' return a part of him lives again in my heart. As long as the birds sing, Donny will be a part of my summer.



~ a Parent, TCF, Bangor, ME

## ***How To Access To Compassionate Friends On-Line Support Chat Groups***

To access the on-line support system go to [compassionatefriends.org](http://compassionatefriends.org) or use key word "Compassionate Friends". Click on Find Support then click On-Line Communities then click on Get OnLine Support. You will need to register for the chat rooms.

## ***How To Access To Compassionate Friends Facebook Groups***

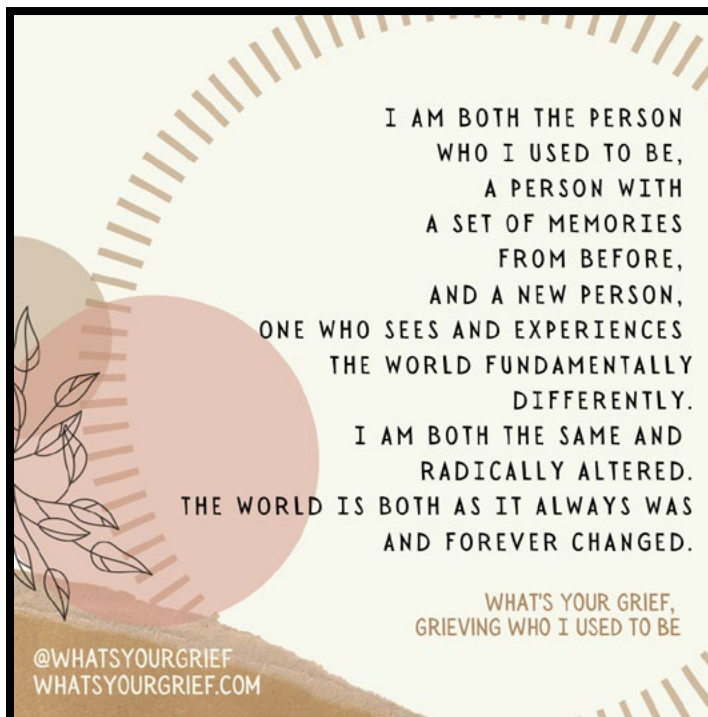
For the national TCF Facebook page go to Facebook and enter Compassionate Friends USA.

For individual groups within Facebook, please go to [compassionatefriends.org](http://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](http://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.

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## ***An Employment Agency Named Grief***

Did you know that the minute your child died, you immediately joined the ranks of the employed? Never mind that you already had a job, or that your every moment was taken up by your role as wife/mother or husband/father, or that you had more than you could handle on a volunteer basis. You now have another job that carries with it no title of importance, but it is important nonetheless.

This new job involves the sad, but necessary task of creating a new life that does not include your dead child, and you don't even want to do it. For most, it is full-time employment for the next couple of years, if you are newly bereaved. It seems impossible in the beginning when your every waking moment is filled with thoughts of your old life with your child, but even the reliving of memories is a start toward the rebuilding of your life. You can't move forward until you have revisited these old memories enough times. Eventually, you learn by process of experiencing all those special family times how it is you get on with the business of surviving without your child, how to start new traditions.

The job description for your new position calls for abilities you may not feel you qualify for at this time, things such as: an ability to be consumed by anger, and yet you let go of it once you have dealt with it honestly; an ability to eventually forgive yourself because you did the best you could under the circumstances, and a capacity for inordinate amounts of patience with yourself and others around you as you make your way through pain-filled days.

You also learn to maintain some hope for better days ahead. All of these are prerequisites to succeeding at your new job. By bravely reaching out in the days and months ahead, you'll find that you are slowly learning how to build one day upon the other until finally you realize you are maintaining a balance you once thought impossible.

You'll look back and discover you're going on with life and that a new life does go on without your lost child. You will note that I did not say a better life-just a new life. Then you'll find you need not continue full-time at your job of grief. Maintaining the status quo of your new life will require some attention from time to time. That's when you become employed on a part-time basis. Look forward to that time.

~ Mary Cleckley TCF Atlanta, GA

### ***The Tides of Grief***

*When grief is new,  
it wraps your life in pain.*

*When grief goes on,  
it teaches you endurance.*

*When grief grows up,  
it shows you how to heal.*



There are some days when nothing helps. Silent pain echoes across the heart, leaving tear stains and shattered dreams. It hurts to move, to think, to breathe. It even hurts to be. On those days, when memories burn scars deep into the soul, there seems little relief.

All the coping tricks we have tried in the past seem to fail us, and we are left with a pain so deep that we fear we will be consumed by it. We firmly believe that we shall never again find hope or joy in the world. Our own death often seems the only escape....

That despair comes at the bottom of the valley. We have all stumbled across those treacherous rocks – many of us more than once. Just as we begin to think that we might survive, something tumbles us back into the darkness, and we are sure we have drowned.

What then? It is as if we are left without our dreams or our memories. Existence has become a void, filled with nothingness – not even hurt. On those days, we cannot even feel our pain. We come to know that we can never return to the land of fairy tales where everything lives happily ever after.

Those are the days when we must "put on" our **rose-colored glasses** and learn to "see" in new ways. I always carry my rose-colored glasses with me because I never know when such a day is going to happen.

My special glasses give a rosy hue to even the most dismal of views; but more important, people look at me differently. Maybe they see me differently because I see things in a new way. Just putting on my rose-colored glasses gives me a lift. I know that whatever I am looking at or feeling hasn't really changed! I have changed! Whenever I have dared to laugh in the face of pain, the pain didn't change or go away. I simply changed the way I saw the pain or the emptiness or hurt of grief.

Rose-colored glasses are simply a dramatic change in perspective. But if I can catch my breath and gain a few seconds of relief from the emptiness of my grief, then they have created a miracle for me. Wearing them isn't denying anything, either. Rather, it is claiming it all. It is searching for joy and light and love, even in the darkest of corners. Love is the reason we hurt, but on those days when all we can see is the hurt, then we fear we may be losing the love as well. Life does become good and warm and loving once again, but only when we have learned to trust enough to claim even that which hurts so terribly. It is a part of us, and as such cannot be ignored or abandoned.

Looking at the world through rose-colored glasses isn't being a Pollyanna, it's being real in the most honest sense. It is an attempt to both accept and live what is, instead of turning it all away and denying that love ever existed. If you ever laughed with your loved one, you have already worn rose-colored glasses. Don't forget them now; they helped you conquer mountains before, and they will help you to see the other side of grief, someday.

Don't wait for joy to come to you—go find it. Search for it, insist on it every day. Wearing rose-colored glasses is a change in perspective; nothing more, nothing less. It is not a

choice between pain or no pain, but how we manage the pain we feel. The trick to those days is learning to live with what you've got instead of wishing something else had happened. As you pick your next step through the valley, remember the rocks are everywhere, but so is the path! Don't let death dominate the place where spring lives in your heart, either.

We cannot protect ourselves from the rain, but we can go together in search of the parade. We can't let death rob us of our rose-colored glasses.



### It's My Choice To Be a Survivor ... or Be a Victim

As a bereaved person, I have choices in how I will cope with my grief. I can choose:

- To seek out people and resources who will listen and care when I need support. **Or** retreat from life and isolate myself from sources of support.
- To search for meaningful things to give my life a sense of purpose. **Or** decide I have no hope or purpose in life and that I have nothing to live for.
- To realize that loss is only one of the many factors in my life. **Or** see myself only as a bereaved person primarily, and allow my having experienced the death to blacken and disrupt all aspects of my life.
- To communicate with family and friends when I need information and help. **Or** wait for others to discover what I need, get angry, and pity myself when they don't.
- To accept what is gone, or not within my control, and take action on what I CAN do. **Or** constantly pity myself over what has been changed, and what I CAN'T do.
- To try to understand how my family feels, that they hurt too. **Or** feel that absolutely no one can understand me and what I am going through.
- To look for ways to FIGHT BACK against negative feelings. **Or** feel that I am helpless and at the mercy of fate.
- To talk about fears with someone I trust. **Or** bottle up fears and horrors that are unexpressed and let them have a lot of power over me.
- To accept my grief as a necessary process in my recovery from loss. **Or** be ashamed of my grief and pretend all is well, to protect the discomfort of others.
- To be angry at the circumstances of the death and seek comfort and strength from God. **Or** blame God for my circumstances and become angry, bitter and alienated from Him.

—Adapted from *Positive Patterns of Survival*,  
a segment of the "I Can Cope" Course



## *On Seeing Many Orange-Colored Butterflies in September*

*Time between summer and winter  
Time under changing skies -  
muted and heavy with foresight,  
or endless blue, smiling at butterflies.*

*Time between summer and winter.  
Time between laughter and tears -  
harvest of beauty remembered,  
and voices (where are you?) to hear.*

*Time between summer and winter,  
thoughtful and painful and wise -  
muted and heavy with losing,  
and also - smiling at butterflies.*

*~ Sacha Wagner*



## *Waiting for Answers*

Years ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the spring, air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared were true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed.

My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said, "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen, too."

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

*~ Mary Clark  
In memory of Max  
TCF, Sugar Land-SW Houston Chapter, TX*

## *July's Child*

Fireworks race toward heaven  
Brilliant colors in the sky.  
Their splendor ends in seconds  
on this evening in July.  
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"  
I whisper with a sigh.  
She was born this month,  
she loved this month  
and she chose this month to die."

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks  
glowing briefly in the dark,  
they are gone too soon, and so was she -  
having been and left her mark.  
A glorious, incandescent life,  
A catalyst, a spark . . .  
Her being gently lit my path  
and softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death of my  
happy summer child  
Marked a life too brief that ended  
without ranchor, without guile.  
Like the fireworks that leave images  
on unprotected eyes . . .  
Her lustrous life engraved my heart . . .  
With love that never dies.

*~ Sally Migliaccio  
TCF, Long Island, NY*





This year's virtual TCF National Conference is featuring some terrific keynote speakers, workshops for parents, grandparents and siblings on many grief-related topics, Sharing Sessions and a Candle Lighting. As a bonus for those who register, the workshops, keynotes, etc. are being recorded and may be viewed on line for 90 days following the actual conference dates.

For more information about the conference and to register visit:

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/44th-tcf-national-conference/>

## September and a New School Year

To most people school means:

The kids out from under foot, caps on.  
Buying a new lunch box, new clothes and the usual school supplies.

Fixing breakfast and trying to get it eaten.

Getting to a school bus on time.

What does school mean to a mother who has lost a child?

Watching other children filled with excitement.

A little boy who should be in kindergarten.

A brother who must go off to school by himself.

A teacher who must reach out to a class, when her little one won't be in school this year.

A mother sending two children off, when there should be three.

Many tears, behind smiling faces!

~ Patsy Hedges  
TCF Frederick, MD



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

### A Different View



People tend to believe that grief shrinks over time



What really happens is that we grow around our grief

from: [www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)

## **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.