



# The Compassionate Friends

**Topeka Chapter**

**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

*Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter*

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[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

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

March ~ April 2017  
Editor: Susan Chan  
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66614-3629  
(785) 272-4895

## MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 27, 2017

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

**Ask It Basket** - At this meeting we invite those attending to ask questions about any aspect of their grief journey. We will also pass the AskIt Basket that contains questions that will stimulate discussion and sharing within the group. No questions are off limits. The grief experience can be a multi-faceted and confusing one and, as we know, is unique in many ways for each person. But it can be helpful to hear other's opinions and experiences as well as share some of your own.

## APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 24, 2017

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:***

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

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

*Margaret & Tad Kramar & Benjamin Good in loving memory of her son and his brother Spenser Thomas Good who died on April 30<sup>th</sup>*



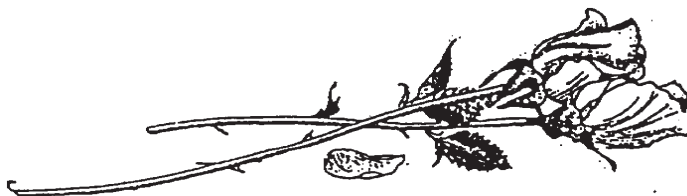
*Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her daughter Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill who died on March 19<sup>th</sup>*

*Damon & Collene Tucker in loving memory of their daughter Brittany Nicole Tucker who was born on April 30<sup>th</sup> and died on March 11<sup>th</sup>*

*Terry & Kathy Watson in loving memory of their son Taylor William Clay Watson who was born on April 12<sup>th</sup> and died on March 3<sup>rd</sup>*

*The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved prents. 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, fram any cause; and to foster the physical and emotional health of all bereaved parents, grandparents and surviving siblings.*

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**We Need Not Walk Alone**

## From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

Spring seems to have sprung in Kansas despite the occasional cold days and even a few snowflakes. Our weather has been unseasonably warm and the plants in my garden are already popping their heads out of the soil in anticipation of the new season. Sometimes I think that we, as grievers, are like those plants. We have perhaps remained hidden in the underground of our grief through the long winter months. I know I am a solar person who needs my regular dose of sunshine and dark winter days sometimes seem to make my grief journey a little bit harder. But over the past 25 years (how can it be 25 years?) since my Rachael's death, I have found that there is within me an "Eternal Spring" - the need to move on in positive ways in my life and not always to feel weighed down by my grief. I have also learned over the past quarter century that moving forward in my life does not mean leaving Rachael and the love I have for her behind. I carry her memory and my love for her in my heart every day. She influences still the way I think and feel about things; the decisions I make. And so I hope, as Springs begins to bloom all around us, that you may begin to feel a lessening of the pain of your grief. I hope that you can feel the continual presence of your loved one who wants you to walk once again in the sunshine and live the kind of life they would want for you.

I also wanted to remind you that we will be culling the newsletter mailing list with the May/June 2017 issue. So, if you have not returned your yellow form that was in the Jan/Feb 2017 newsletter, please do so NOW! We want everyone who wishes to receive this newsletter to do so, but we also need to know whether or not you wish to remain on the list. If you have misplaced your form, you can download one from our Topeka Chapter website ([www.tcftopeka.org](http://www.tcftopeka.org)) under "Newsletters" in the menu bar. Or you can send me a note at the address on the front of this newsletter, or e-mail me at [tcftopeka@gmail.com](mailto:tcftopeka@gmail.com). You also have the option of receiving this newsletter electronically on your e-mail, but we can't add you to the e-list unless we have your e-mail address. Please let us hear from you and we also welcome your suggestions about what you would like to see in the newsletter, what topics you would like to have discussed at monthly meetings, and any other thoughts and ideas to keep our TCF Chapter relevant to those we try to support.

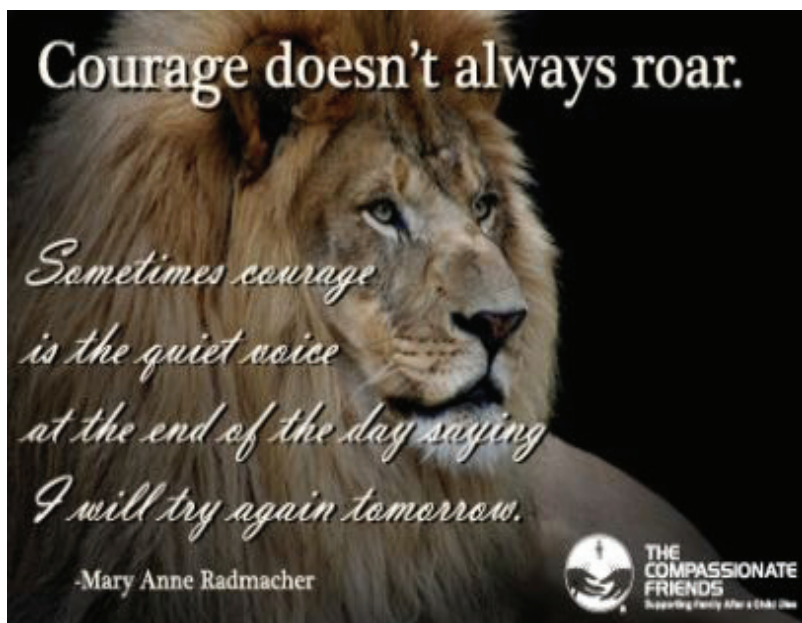
We have had a couple of Chapter members arrange for matching funds through their companies which has really helped us to cover our expenses. Does the company you work for have a matching funds program? You can find out through your human resources department. Such matching funds can double the value of a donation you make to TCF in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling. The process is usually pretty simple involving turning in some forms to the company, so check it out at your workplace. We would really appreciate your efforts.

At this point, due to financial constraints, we are still unable to publish Memory Pages in the hard copy of this newsletter. However, any Memory Pages submitted are included in the electronic copy of the newsletter and may be viewed in PDF format on the Chapter website, again under "Newsletters" in the menu bar. Past issues of this newsletter are also found on our website and may be viewed in this same area.

We invite you to attend a monthly support group meeting if you have never done so before. 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. There is really nothing quite like being in a room with people who truly do understand what this type of loss can mean and how it can affect our lives in so many different ways. 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.

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

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom



**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 your wish to support. The Topeka Compassionate Friends Chapter NPO number is 65403. 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.

# 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:

♥ *Bert & Elaine Bandstra in loving memory of their daughter Diane Joy Bandstra who was born March 24<sup>th</sup>*

♥ *Mary Harrington & John Jones in loving memory of her children John Carl Harrington who died on March 18<sup>th</sup>; and Jaime Harrington who was stillborn on February 3<sup>rd</sup>*

♥ *Mark & Debi Harvey in loving memory of their son Nathan Harvey who died on April 10<sup>th</sup>*

♥ *Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her daughter Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill who died on March 19<sup>th</sup>*

♥ *Seaboard Corp., Shawnee Mission, KS in support of the work of the Topeka TCF Chapter*

♥ *Terry & Kathy Watson in loving memory of their son Taylor William Clay Watson who was born on April 12<sup>th</sup> and died on March 3<sup>rd</sup>*

Thank you for your gifts which 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, or November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".

**TCF National Office e-mail:**  
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Compassionate Friends web address:**  
www.compassionatefriends.org

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

**Kansas Regional Coordinator:**  
Marty & Renda Weaver - (785) 823-7191  
mweaver@cox.net

## CALL FOR PHOTOS

If you would like your loved one's photo included in our TCF Chapter's memorial slide presentation, please do one of the following:

1. If you have computer access and can send a jpg file of your child's photo electronically, please send to: dtucker35@cox.net Be sure to include your loved one's full name, birth and death dates.

2. If you are not able to send a photo file electronically, you may send a photo print (do not send the only copy you have!) so that we may scan it into digital format. Send the photo plus the full name, birth and death dates for your loved one to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of your photo. We will continue to collect photos throughout the year to add to the slide presentation. If you have already sent in a photo, you need not resend one.

3. The Memorial Slide Presentation is a part of our Annual December Candle Lighting Memorial.

## Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

**March 15, 2017** - Last date to turn in your Newsletter Renewal Form if you wish to remain on our mailing list through 2017. See the Yellow Newsletter Form in January newsletter, or download the form at www.tcftopeka.org under "Newsletters". Return to the address on the form.

**July 28-30, 2017** - The 40<sup>th</sup> National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held in Orlando, FL. Will include over 100 workshops, keynote speakers, Memorial Candle Lighting Ceremony and the 2017 Walk to Remember. For further information, go to the National TCF website at www.compassionatefriends.org

**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.

# Pro Print

**DIGITAL PRINT AND COPY SERVICES**

**838 MASSACHUSETTS ST  
LAWRENCE, KS 66044  
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 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***

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

Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, died on May 6<sup>th</sup>

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, died April 15<sup>th</sup>

Teresa Jenkins Carson, daughter of Phillip and Louise Jenkins, born April 7<sup>th</sup>

Michael Ray Donoho, son of Tammy Collins and Dennis Donoho; and stepson of Edward Collins and Debbie Donoho, died April 11<sup>th</sup>

Dan Evans, brother of Drew Evans, born in April and died on May 21<sup>st</sup>

Claire Elise Fisher, daughter of Debra Fisher, born May 15<sup>th</sup>

Jeff Fitzgibbons, son of Bill and Jean Fitzgibbons, died April 8<sup>th</sup>

Randy Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on May 14<sup>th</sup>

Ryan Flanagan, son of Denis Flanagan, who was born on April 24<sup>th</sup>

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, died April 10<sup>th</sup>

Spenser Thomas Good, son of Margaret Kramar, died April 30<sup>th</sup>

Nathan Harvey, son of Mark and Debi Harvey; brother of Rachel, Amanda and Caleb Harvey; grandson of Velata Tibbs, died April 10<sup>th</sup>

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

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who died on May 7<sup>th</sup>

Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, born May 8<sup>th</sup>

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who was born on May 3<sup>rd</sup>

Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, died May 2<sup>nd</sup>

Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who was born on April 22<sup>nd</sup>

Andrew Garrett Lindeen, grandson of Mary J. Lindeen, who was born on May 8<sup>th</sup>

Morgan Myers, daughter of Alta and Rocky Myers, who died on April 3<sup>rd</sup>

Eric Alan Palmberg, son of Jim and Doris Palmberg, born on April 14<sup>th</sup>

Evan Michael Schuetz, son of Tom and Debbie Schuetz, who died April 17<sup>th</sup>

Rachel Diana Sowers, daughter of Bill and Diana Sowers, who died on May 17<sup>th</sup>

Sydney Diane Tate, daughter of Jeff and Misty Tate, born April 30<sup>th</sup>

Brittany Nicole Tucker, daughter of Damon and Collene Tucker, born April 30<sup>th</sup>

Taylor William Clay Watson, son of Terry and Kathy Watson, who was born April 12<sup>th</sup>

(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. This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for April and May.

**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 7 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 sreams67@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. 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>.

### **FREE online subscription of TCF's national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*, now available**

The Compassionate Friends national magazine *We Need Not Walk Alone* is now available free through an online subscription. TCF is also archiving past editions at TCF National Magazine and Archive. Those who do not wish to subscribe can view the magazine in the archive once the next issue has been published. Past issues of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, starting with Winter/Spring 2011-2012, are available in the archive. On the home page ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)), click on Find Support, then Online Community, then Sign Up for National Publications. You can also sign up for the TCF E-Newsletter at this site to keep up with all that is happening in the organization.

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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.

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**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/>

You will find many other private Facebook groups (link found above) you can join if they fit your relationship and/or loss. There are 19 separate group such as the ones mentioned above for child, sibling and grandchild loss as well as Loss to Sudden Death, Suicide, Drunk/Impaired Driver, Homicide, Special Needs Child, Long-Term Illness, Cancer, Mental Illness, Substance Related Cause (both parent and a separate sibling group), Stepchild, Miscarriage & Stillbirth as well as Infant & Toddler Loss, Men in Grief, Grandparents Raising the children of their Child who died, and for our crafters, Crafty Corner.

The private Facebook groups are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. A private message will be sent prior to approval. Please reply to the message so we can confirm your request. Please be sure to check your mailbox marked "Message Requests" if you do not receive one in your mailbox. You may need to look under message requests that have been filtered by Facebook. 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.

Connecting with others who have been through a similar loss can be so beneficial, and our Facebook groups can be accessed 24/7.

# Madison “Maddie” Rae Nail 1996-2012



9<sup>th</sup> Grade



Maddie,

It is hard to believe we have lived five years without you here with us. We all know you are in a glorious place – still, we would rather you were here. We miss your smile, spunk, competitiveness, sense of humor & your laugh. We are grateful your friends still write to us, post on your memorial page, and take items to the cemetery. Love, Mom & Mark, Dad, Allie, Jesse, Cale, Braden, Grams & Gramps, Lisa and Lexi



10<sup>th</sup> Grade



Kindergarten



5<sup>th</sup> Grade

## Godzilla in Pink

One night I was flicking channels on the TV and came to a station run by fundamentalist Christian organization. They were talking about miracles.... specifically about a little boy who had a terrible disease but had been saved through the prayers of “true believers.” This boy was a “miracle.”

So why wasn't my child a miracle? I asked God this question that night in my prayers. Why wasn't my daughter a miracle?

When I woke up the next morning a thought came to my head... an answer to my question.... Our daughter “was” a miracle.... just not in the way we'd hoped she would be.

I'd read something once by a Jewish rabbi that didn't touch me until after Rachel died. He wrote that each of our lives is like a stone thrown into a pond. How beautiful/rich/old the stone is doesn't matter. What matters is how much “earthiness” (i.e. weight) the stone has... how big it is. The bigger the stone the more it ripples out when it hits the water, moving everything else around it.

The rabbi said that a life well lived gathered in love from all around it, increasing its mass/size. Some stones/lives could be around for many, many years and yet not gather much size at all... not enough love. Some stones/lives might exist for what seemed a moment but gathered so much mass/love that they caused a small tidal wave when hitting the water.

My daughter, Rachel, was a boulder. She was Godzilla carved from pink marble... and when she hit the water the waves that



went out flooded everything around... and the ripples still move us and always will.

I read something else by another Jewish writer about a year ago, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, that sort of says the same thing... “A long life is not good enough... but a good life is long enough.” The length of the life doesn't increase our greatness..... the greatness of the love within us and felt for us by others.... that is the measure of our souls.

My child lived a short life... but she loved and was loved with great power. What a miracle she was.... and still is.

~ Bill Sowers  
father of Rachel, Godzilla in pink  
July 30, 1992 - May 17, 2000

## The Stone

A post I wrote several years ago about what a grieving parent needs has been recirculating lately, putting me in touch with so many newly grieving moms. When I read their stories and the pain running in between and on top of their words I'm reminded of how far I've come and how close I am to still being right there.

The best way I can describe grieving over a child as the years go by is to say it's similar to carrying a stone in your pocket. When you walk, the stone brushes against your skin. You feel it. You always feel it. But depending on the way you stand or the way your body moves, the smooth edges might barely graze your body.



Sometimes you lean the wrong way or you turn too quickly and a sharp edge pokes you. Your eyes water and you rub your wound but you have to keep going because not everyone knows about your stone or if they do, they don't realize it can still bring this much pain.

There are days you are simply happy now, smiling comes easy and you laugh without thinking. You slap your leg during that laughter and you feel your stone and aren't sure whether you should be laughing still. The stone still hurts.

Once in a while you can't take your hand off that stone. You run it over your fingers and roll it in your palm and are so preoccupied by it's weight, you forget things like your car keys and home address. You try to leave it alone but you just can't. You want to take a nap but it's been so many years since you've called in “sad” you're not sure anyone would understand anymore or if they ever did.

But most days you can take your hand in and out of your pocket, feel your stone and even smile at its unwavering presence. You've accepted this stone as your own, crossing your hands over it, saying “mine” as children do.

You rest more peacefully than you once did, you've learned to move forward the best you can. Some days you want to show the world what a beautiful memory you're holding. But most days you twirl it through your fingers, smile and look to the sky. You squeeze your hands together and hope you are living in a way that honors the missing piece you carry, until your arms are full again.

Source: <https://laurenalston.com/2015/04/14/the-stone-by-jessica/>

## Choose Life!

"It will never be the same. Never." As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief's profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, "...never the same."

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls "The Valley of the Shadow." It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. Between. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.

Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever "the same." Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery.

Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

~ Marcia F. Alig  
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

## Kevin's Death 2/93

Go to the sea,  
He said to me.  
Go to the sea  
And there  
Let every outgoing tide  
Draw from you your pain,  
The pain with depth enough  
To fill the sea.  
There, stand and wait,  
For every incoming tide  
Gifts to you my depth of grace,  
Enough to fill your emptiness.

Got to the sea.  
With every breath  
You breathe with me,  
You breathe the healing from my sea.  
Enter my rhythm of life,  
Ebb and flow of tide,  
This breath of mine,  
Life sustaining,  
Rhythm entwined,  
Your breath and mine.  
In, out  
In, out  
Your breath and mine,  
One with the sea.

~ Sharon Highberger  
May 2008  
Topeka, KS



# **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 ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE  
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**AT TOPEKA, KS**  
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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.

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