



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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www.tcftopeka.org

May ~ June 2017
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MAY MEETING

Monday, May 22, 2017
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Am I Making Progress? - Our grief experience can be such a roller coaster of emotions with its unexpected ups and downs that it may be difficult to feel as though you are making any progress on your journey. Often times, without even knowing it, we have made progress towards healing. It is important to remember that moving towards a place of healing does not mean letting go of the love we had for our child, sibling or grandchild; nor does it necessitate leaving our memories behind. We will talk about some ways to gauge your progress and strategies you can utilize when you feel as though you are "stuck in your grief".

JUNE MEETING

Monday, June 26, 2017
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Men to the Right, Women to the Left - It has long been known that men and women are just "wired" differently and therefore the grief response and journey can be very different for mothers and fathers. This sometimes makes it difficult for couples to relate easily to each other following the death of their child. After our group opening together, we will divide into two groups by gender that will have the opportunity to talk, share and discuss the grief process and journey with others who may truly understand what they are experiencing. The different grieving styles of men and women may also impact your relationship with other family members as well. We especially encourage all fathers to plan to attend.

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:

Dennis & Ann Hermreck in loving memory of their son Mitchell "Gus" Hermreck who died on May 12th

Karen Leiker in loving memory of her daughter Alisha Marie Quigley who was born on March 1st and died on March 12th

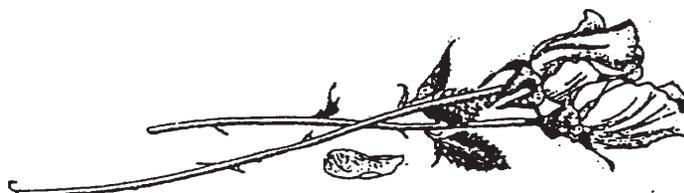
Mary J. Lindeen in loving memory of her grandson Drew Lindeen who was born on May 8th

Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her daughter Madison "Maddie" Naill who was born on June 17th



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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We Need Not Walk Alone

From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

We are slowly edging into summer and the months of May and June can often times be difficult ones for bereaved families. These are the months of high school and college graduations with their attendant celebrations and forward-looking emphasis. For families whose loved one will not be participating in such ceremonies it can indeed be a bittersweet time. You may certainly wish the best for your child's friends who are marking this right of passage, but also mourn what will not be for your child. Then May also brings us Mother's Day when we moms ache for the missing child as we mark the day with friends or family. Quickly following on May's coattails is June which often brings wedding invitations arriving in our mail boxes. Another reminder of what will not be, of what we have lost. I remember the first wedding we attended after our daughter Rachael's death. It was for one of her best friends and while we were so happy for this young woman, we also knew that had circumstances been different, Rachael would have been in the wedding party. Indeed bittersweet. June also brings us Father's Day which can most certainly be a tough day for dads missing their sons and daughters. Sometimes it seems as though we cannot escape all the reminders. I hope you will be patient and gentle with yourselves during this time. Always remember that your child and the love you have for them n(and they for you) lives on in your hearts forever. No, it is not enough, but it is what we have and we need to honor it. Allow yourself the freedom to mourn the losses of this season, but also to cherish your memories. To live the kind of life your child would want for you...a life with meaning, purpose, memory, peace and love.

I am pleased to let you know that our Chapter has been the recipient of two significant donations. We have received a check for \$205.00 which represents matching funds from OneGas Foundation on behalf of their employee and our co-Chapter Leader Damon Tucker. 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. The second donation of \$500.00 has come from a Fidelity Charitable grant from the Orff Family Fund. These funds will be utilized to help support the activities of the Topeka TCF Chapter including the printing and mailing of this newsletter, our two memorial events, and bereaved parent and community outreach resource packets.

Hopefully we will soon be in a position to re-establish Memory Pages in the printed edition of the newsletter. Until that time, however, we will only include Memory Pages in the electronic copy of each newsletter which may be viewed on our website at www.tcftopeka.org under "Newsletters" in the menu bar.

An Update on the Dillions Community Rewards: We have been notified that we will be receiving a check for \$210.78 as our rewards for the first quarter of 2017. This donation was made possible by 23 families signing up and shopping at Dillions. Please see the info below on the Dillions Community Rewards Program and sign up soon so that you too can help support our TCF Chapter as we reach out with friendship, hope and support to bereaved families in northeast Kansas.

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. 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. There are never any dues or required fees to participate.

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

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom

Learning to live with loss is not the same as minimizing the life of your loved one. Finding joy in your present and future is NOT a sign that you no longer value or miss those who were so great a part of your past." —excerpt from, "Regaining Strengths", by Michael Nunky. Entire article can be found on "Opentohope.com"



 The Compassionate Friends
Helping Family After a Loss

Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER - Have you signed up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more participants we have, the more income we can generate. I encourage you to go to www.dillions.com/community-rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity you 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:

♥ *Dennis & Ann Hermreck in loving memory of their son Mitchell Hermreck who died on May 12th*

♥ *Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter Teresa Jenkins Carson
who was born on April 7th and died on June 17th*

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

♥ *Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her daughter Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill who was born on June 17th*

♥ *Thomas & Debra Schuetz in loving memory of their son Evan Michael Schuetz who died on April 17th*

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

July 28-30, 2017 - The 40th 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

September 23, 2017 - Topeka TCF Chapter's 24th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release at Shelter House #6 at Lake Shawnee. More Info and an opportunity to sponsor a dove in your loved one's memory will appear in July/Aug newsletter.

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

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838 MASSACHUSETTS ST
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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

Matthew Wayne Arnold, son of Don and Susan Arnold, born on July 28th and died on June 11th

Diane Joy Bandstra, daughter of Bert and Elaine Bandstra, died on July 28th

Maximus Blindt, son of Heather Blindt; brother of Brad and Natalie; who was born on July 25th



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

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

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

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

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

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

Amber Fleeer, daughter of Darla Hughes and Terry Fleeer, who died on July 7th



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

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

Bradley "Brad" Hurla, son of Mike and Judy Hurla, who was born on July 21st



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

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

Andrew Garrett Lindeen, grandson of Mary J. Lindeen, died on July 29th

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

Amy Lundin, daughter of Ralph and Judy Lundin, died on July 28th

Nicholas Artck McCarthy, son of Sabrina Cruz, who was born on July 26th

Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, born on July 26th; died on June 27th



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

(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 June and July.

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MADDIE RAE NAILL



June 2003, Age 7



June 17, 2011, Age 15

June 2000, Age 4



June 2009, Age 13



Maddie, we all miss your beautiful smile. Not a day goes by where we don't wish we would be celebrating every day with you. Special days, such as your birthday, are especially difficult.

Love, Mom & Mark, Dad, Allie, Jesse, Cale, Braden, Grams and Gramps, Lisa, Lexi and all your friends!

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 1st and 3rd 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 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 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), 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.

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.



Find us on:
facebook®

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/>

New College Age Support Resource - There is a new nonprofit organization called Actively Moving Forward dedicated to supporting your adults grieving the illness or death of a loved one. The organization accomplishes its mission by creating Actively Moving Forward Campus Chapters on college campuses nationwide that connect and empower grieving college students to support one another and participate in community service in memory of their deceased loved ones, raising awareness about the needs of grieving young adults. You can check it out at www.activelymovingforward.org

Another online resource for grieving siblings is called "Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins" where teenagers can share their stories, illustrations, help items and other information through this online journal. You can check it out at <http://fireinmyheartjournal.com/> This site is under the auspices of Centering Corporation of Omaha, NE. There is also a Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins Facebook page.

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.

Ten Steps to Reducing Tension

By Nancy Weil

It sneaks up on us at the most unexpected times. It doesn't take much to send us there: an inappropriate comment from someone, too much to do and no energy to do it or a sudden flood of emotions welling up. Your day is going smoothly and suddenly, when one thing throws you a curve ball, you begin to feel yourself getting tense. The stress begins to build and your mind begins to look for ways to get out and lay on a beach somewhere. While thoughts of Tahiti may be appealing, the reality is that you have only two choices – stress out or seek relief. Try any of the steps below and watch the frustrations melt away.

1. Breathe

Because breathing happens automatically, we give it little thought. Big mistake. When you focus on the breath, you can relax and center yourself instantly. Close your eyes, take three deep breaths, fill your lungs and then you can continue your day feeling refreshed. You can even imagine that you are breathing in calm with each inhalation and releasing stress with each exhalation. Name each annoyance and feel it leave as you let it go with the breath. Holding on to our frustrations makes no sense. Sophie Tucker put it simply, “keep breathing.”

2. Laugh

It is impossible to be stressed and laughing at the same time. It feels good, it is always available and it works! No stimulus is needed, just open your mouth and laugh. Even better, take a minute and go to www.youtube.com and search for your favorite comedian. After watching a couple of clips of their funniest material, you will be ready to take on the day with a clear mind and improved attitude. Therapeutic laughter requires only that you make the sound. Even on those days when you feel the least like laughing, you can still surround yourself with humor and get much needed relief.

3. Visualize

Athletes use this technique all of the time to improve their performance on the field. Create a powerful image of yourself in the most beautiful, serene location you can think of. Use as many of the senses as you can in your visualization. See your surroundings; hear the surf or the music playing; smell the flowers or the sea air; feel the breeze or the mist from the waterfall and taste the Pina Coladas! Once you discover your inner nirvana, return to it whenever you are in need of a mini-vacation. By training the mind to relate this image to a feeling of peace, you can de-stress wherever you are.

4. Move

Not houses (that just causes even more stress!) Move your body. Exercise helps to clear your mind, stabilize your emotions, and it keeps your body healthy. It isn't necessary to run a marathon to shift gears, just get up and walk around for a few minutes. Do some light stretching—neck rolls and shoulder shrugs are good for letting go of the tight muscles we have across our upper back. Not all stress can be labeled distress; eustress is a beneficial type of stress. Exercise is considered a type of eustress activity.

5. Journal

Pick up a pen and paper and write it out. Let the words flow freely without editing. Allow your feelings and frustrations to be expressed in whatever form they may take: words, pictures, scribbles. Not only is this a great stress reliever, it can also lead to answers and ideas to challenges that are getting in your way. You can save these rants as a record of what has bothered you in the past and as a way to look at what was actually a problem and what

(in hindsight) was merely a trivial aggravation. With the passage of time and perspective, you can notice how something that seemed so problematic was actually unimportant and unworthy of intense emotions. By understanding how things get better with time, it allows you to apply that thinking in the moment rather than letting your blood pressure boil. Not comfortable saving your journal? Then type on your computer and hit delete.

6. Talk

Find an understanding ear and unload your troubles. It always helps to tell a friend, family member or co-worker what ails you. If you want some feedback, let them know that their advice and insight would be appreciated. If you just want someone to listen, then warn them of that ahead of time. Be careful of what you say and who you say it to. Remember words spoken out of frustration are not always well thought out and, like an item bought on final sale, cannot be taken back.

7. Reframe

Get creative in finding a way to look at your issues in a different way. Take the other person's point of view, come at it from a point of humor, or take it to its' absurd extreme. How far-fetched a conclusion can you imagine? Get silly in your approach. Discovering another way of looking at your stressors, allows you to shift your thinking and tactic.

8. Play

Toys are not just for children. Our inner child still wants to play. Fill your home or office with gadgets and gizmos that will delight and distract you. Bubbles, bobble heads and hand-held electronic games are all you need to take a joy break and chase stress away. Playing allows you to engage both your left and your right brain and helps with memory retention and creative problem solving.

9. Action

Nothing dispels stress faster than taking positive, assertive action toward solving a problem. Worry is like being on a merry-go-round—you may feel like you are doing something, but you aren't getting anywhere. When faced with a problem, sit down and determine what is within your control and what isn't. Let go of those factors over which you have no control and focus instead on what you can do... then do it.

10. Let Go

When all else fails and you are still feeling frazzled, do the only sane act you can: let it go. By releasing your problems, you actually are allowing greater forces to come to play. Rather than a passive act, letting go can be extremely empowering. The feeling of freedom that accompanies this one step can bring you the serenity you have been seeking.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy is a leading authority on the relationship between humor and grief and is known for her energetic, entertaining and content-rich programs. She is a NYS National Speakers Association Board Member, member of the Humor and Health Association of Western New York as well as the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH). Leading the world's only laughter club held in a cemetery, Nancy knows how to bring the benefits of laughter to any place. As a Certified Funeral Celebrant, Nancy understands how humor can be used to aid the grieving process. www.thelaughacademy.com

Source: From *Grief Digest Magazine*, Centering Corporation, Omaha, NE <https://centering.org> Toll free: 866-218-0101

Surviving a Child on Mother's Day

If you're looking for an answer this Mother's Day to why God reclaimed your child, I don't know. I only know that thousands of mothers out there today desperately need an answer as to why they were permitted to go through the elation of carrying a child and then lose it to miscarriage, accident, violence, suicide, disease or drugs.



Motherhood isn't just a series of contractions; it's a state of mind. From the moment we know life is inside us, we feel a responsibility to protect and defend that human being. It's a promise we can't keep. We beat ourselves to death over that pledge. "If I hadn't worked through the eighth month." "If I had taken him/

her to the doctor when he had a fever." "If I hadn't let him use the car that night." "If I hadn't been so naïve, I'd have noticed he was on drugs or needed help with depression."

The longer I live, the more convinced I become that surviving changes us. After the bitterness, the anger, the guilt and despair are tempered by time, we look at life differently.

While I was writing my book: "I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise," I talked with mothers who had lost a child to cancer. Every single one said that death gave their lives new meaning and purpose. And who do you think prepared them for the rough, lonely road that they had to travel? - their dying child.

They pointed their mothers toward the future and told them to keep going. The children had already accepted what their mothers were fighting to reject. Even those children who died a sudden death are able to spiritually touch their parents and help them live on. The children in the bombed-out nursery in Oklahoma City have touched many lives. Workers who had probably given their kids a mechanical pat on the head without thinking that morning were making calls home during the day to their children to say, "I love you."

Joy and life abound for millions of mothers on Mother's Day. It's also a day of appreciation and respect. I can think of no mothers who deserve it more than those who had to give a child back. In the face of misery they ask, "Why me?" but there is no answer. Maybe they are the instruments that are left behind to perpetuate the lives that were lost and appreciate the times they had with their children. They are the ones who help pick up the pieces when tragedy occurs and others have lost their children.

~ Erma Bombeck

Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also.

Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

~ Doug Hughes, TCF ~ Cincinnati, Ohio



Why We Talk About the Ones We've Lost

By John Polo

For all those who talk about their late loved one. For all those who talk about their loss. This is why we talk about them.

Hint: It is not for attention.

✿ We talk about them because we love them. In life and in death.

✿ We talk about them because they are still a part of us. And always will be.

✿ We talk about them because the love we shared and the loss we endured have shaped us into the person we are today.

✿ We talk about them because we find it therapeutic. For our minds, for our hearts and for our souls.

✿ We talk about them because it helps us, and we hope it will help others.

✿ We talk about them because the memories make us happy. And we need to feel that.

✿ We talk about them because the memories make us sad. And we need to feel that.

✿ We talk about them because we want the world to know the struggle.

✿ Of cancer. Of suicide. Of drug addiction. Of heart disease. Of sudden death. Of terminal illness.

✿ The struggle of loss.

✿ We talk about them because we want you to appreciate what you have. Because in hindsight, we may realize we didn't.

✿ We talk about them because they are still ours. And we are still theirs.

✿ We talk about them because in the day-to-day grind that is life, we sometimes feel them drifting away. And we think talking about them will make us feel closer to them today.

✿ We talk about them because we want to.

✿ We talk about them because we need to.

✿ And yes, sometimes, we talk about them because nobody else is.

✿ We carry on their legacies.

✿ We may talk about them because we take that responsibility seriously.

When Michelle was sick and dying, she would often tell me of her fears that everyone would forget her. That she would become a distant memory. That nobody would speak of her anymore. That it would be like she never existed.

Nope. Not going to happen. Not on my watch. Not now. Not ever.

✿ We talk about them because we won't let them be forgotten.

Source: <https://themighty.com/2017/03/why-we-talk-about-loved-ones-after-death/>

Even in the Darkness There is Light

When your child died, you were thrown into the dark night of the soul. You can hide in fear and despair or you can make friends with the darkness. Begin on a clear, starry night. Preferably, not when it is 30 below zero!

If you live in the country, you are in the right place. If you live in the city, get out of town! Get away from the lights and sounds of the city. Go find "the middle of nowhere" and step into the darkness with no distractions. Close your eyes and listen. Hear the howling of the coyotes in the coulees, the wind caressing the prairie and the beat of your own heart. Even the eerie whir of electricity as the energy surges the length of the high lines.

Now open your eyes and look at the ground around you. Then let your eyes move upward and outward. Are there trees nearby creating shadows in the moonlight? Do you see a yard light or two from country homes? Do you see the glow of a distant town on the horizon?

From the horizon, let your eyes scan upward to nature's nightlights. There is no more majestic sight than the night sky as it stretches over the prairie in all its glory. The stars are endless and fascinating. The ever-changing moon glows in gentle radiance. And if you are lucky, the Aurora Borealis blesses you with an appearance. Remember, even in darkness there is light.

Feel and see the immensity of it all. Know the darkness. Feel the darkness. Wrap yourself in it and release your fears. Exchange them for familiarity with and knowledge of the night. Absorb the solitude and peace of the world around you. Just as your physical senses can make peace with the darkness in this world, so can your spiritual senses make peace with the darkness in your soul. There are tears and anguish there, but there are also lessons to be learned and there is rest to be found.

Do not rush to leave the darkness. Be calm there. Feel it, absorb it. Let the darkness be a place where you learn to be patient with yourself and gain the wisdom and strength to go on. Let people you love and those who love and care about you provide the starshine and moonlight.

Remember, even in darkness there is light. Know this, most of all: that the darkness in your soul is part of the cycle of life. You will again walk in the light of day where you will carry the remembrance of your child and live the lessons you learned in your soul's deepest night.

~ JoAnne Rademacher ~TCF/Minot, ND
TCF Website/Posted April 4, 2017

“The Forgotten Griever”

our children who grieve the loss of a sibling

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.

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



The Compassionate Friends

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

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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.