



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

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

September ~ October 2017
Editor: Susan Chan
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Topeka, KS 66614-3629
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SEPTEMBER SPECIAL EVENT

Saturday, September 23, 2017
Shelter House #6 at Lake Shawnee
11:30 am - 3:30pm

Please Note Date Change!!

24th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release - We invite you to join us for this special event in loving memory of all our children, grandchildren and siblings who "left too soon". The event will include a potluck luncheon, a Memorial Program and a Dove Release. You also have the opportunity to sponsor a Dove in memory of your loved one. This event is held at Shelter House #6 at Lake Shawnee. This shelter house is located on the **east side** of Lake Shawnee. There was a yellow RSVP/Dove Sponsorship Form in the July/August Newsletter or you can print one from the Topeka TCF Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) under Special Events. This event **takes the place** of our regular support group meeting for September. We hope to see you there!

OCTOBER MEETING

Monday, October 23, 2017
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Holiday Blues and How to Cope with it All - It's getting to be "that" time of year again when we are inundated with preparations for the upcoming holidays - Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza and New Years. Holiday times can be especially difficult for grieving families and this meeting will address some of the issues we face during the season of holidays. We will also talk about strategies to make the holidays less stressful and ways in which you can remember your loved one at holiday time. We invite you to bring your questions, concerns and also to share things you have found helpful in dealing with the holidays.

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:

Brenda and the late Frank Bissey in loving memory of their daughter Robin Lyn Paulson who was born on October 8th

Duane and Mary Eberhardt in loving memory of their son Jerry Eberhardt who was born on September 1st and died on October 25th

Lois Bogia in loving memory of her son Richard Bogia - no dates provided.

Joe and Ann Steinbock in loving memory of their son Jeff Steinbock who died on October 11th

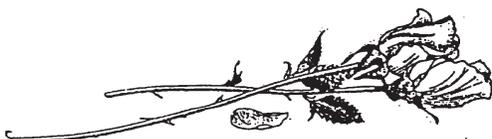
Don and Carolyn Brentlinger in loving memory of their son Monty Brentlinger who died on October 21st



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



Have You Sent in Your RSVP!!!

24th Annual Memorial Picnic & Dove Release
Saturday, September 23, 2017
Shelter House #6 at Lake Shawnee



See Yellow RSVP Form in July/August Newsletter or download PDF at Chapter website www.tcftopeka.org under Special Events in the menu bar.

From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

We are moving into the Fall season now with leaves beginning to turn, temperatures moderating a bit, and a whole new round of events and activities starting up. For many of you, this will be the first year your beloved child or grandchild will not be heading off to school. Sometimes it can be difficult being in a store where parents and children are eagerly searching for "just the right backpack" or marking off their list of needed school supplies purchased. The sight of the yellow school busses can also tug at the heartstrings. And it seems no sooner than school gets started, we begin to be confronted with all of the holidays that cascade in reminding us of that special individual who is no longer a part of the celebration. At October's meeting, we will be having a special topic on handling the holidays, offering tips on coping with these events and also on how to include your deceased loved one in whatever celebrations you choose to participate in. We understand that this can be a rough time emotionally, so please remember to take good care of yourself.

Hopefully many of you are planning on attending the Topeka Chapter's **24th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release** on Saturday, September 23, 2017 at Shelter House # 6 at Lake Shawnee. There was a yellow RSVP form in the July/August newsletter or you can download one from our Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org under Special Events). The form also offers you an opportunity to sponsor a dove in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling. The event will include a potluck luncheon, a memorial program with music/poems/readings, and the release of doves in loving memory of all those who "left too soon". We hope to see you there!

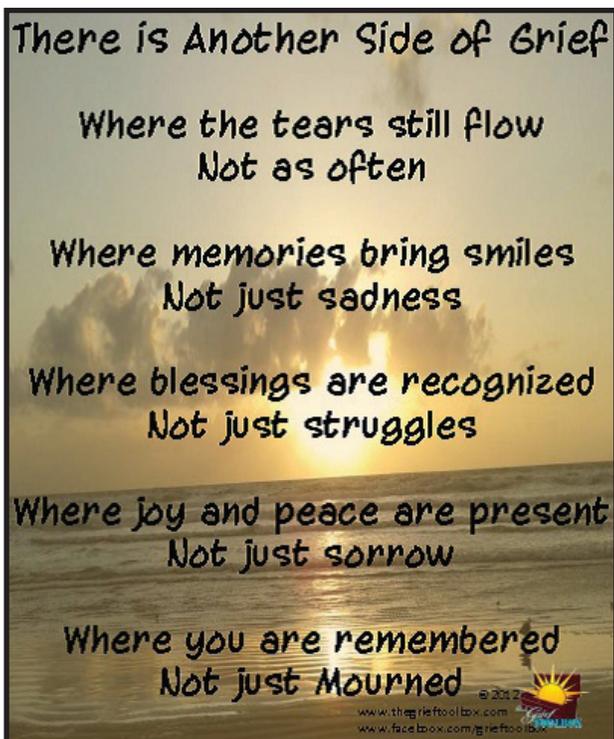
Please take note of the items listed under Upcoming Events on the following page. Of special interest to those of you with younger surviving children is the Grief Camp for Kids at the end of September and the Teen Retreat in January 2018. Also listed under coming events are the locations for National TCF Conferences through 2022. Next year is St. Louis and will be the closest one to us for a few years, so you might start thinking about attending it. In the coming months more information about the St. Louis Conference will be available on the National TCF website (www.compassionatefriends.org) and in this newsletter.

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.

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



A Word on our Photo Wall - I also wanted to remind you that we maintain a photo gallery of our beloved children, grandchild and siblings that is displayed at every meeting. If you would like your loved one represented, send in a 4 x 6 inch photo (vertical or horizontal presentation) along with their full name, their birth and death dates and your name. You can send these to me at my address on the front page of the newsletter. You may also request that your child's photo become a part of our annual Photo Tribute video that is shared at the December Memorial Candle Lighting Program.

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

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.

♥ *Brenda Bissey in loving memory of her husband Frank Bissey who was
born on October 26th and died on November 11th*

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, or November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".

Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

September 23, 2017 - Topeka TCF Chapter's 24th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release at Shelter House #6 at Lake Shawnee. Look for the yellow RSVP Form in July/Aug newsletter that also offers you the opportunity to sponsor a dove in memory of your loved one.

September 30 - Oct. 1, 2017 - Grief Camp for Kids (6-12) sponsored by the Center for Hope and Healing of Midland Hospice Care. To be held at campsite near Harveyville. For further info contact Suz McIver at 785-221-7359.

October 20-22, 2017 - Regional TCF Conference in Nashville, TN. Theme is "Memories of Love/Melodies of Hope in Music City". Registration is \$75 and includes Friday dinner/Candle Lighting, Saturday Continental breakfast and lunch. For further info see TCF National Website under "Events" at www.compassionatefriends.org

December 11, 2017 - The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting begins at 7:00 p.m. in each time zone. Memorial Book to leave a message will be available on the National Compassionate Friends website (www.compassionatefriends.org)

December 18, 2017 - The Topeka Chapter's Memorial Candle Lighting will be held in the Formation Room at Most Pure Heart. Starts promptly at 7 p.m. Votive candles will be provided. More info in Nov/Dec 2017 Chapter newsletter.

January 19 & 20, 2018 - Teen Grief Retreat (ages 12-18) also sponsored by the Center for Hope and Healing. For further info, contact Suz McIver at 785-221-7359.

Editor's Note: Volunteers are needed to help with both camps. If you are interested in helping out, contact Suz McIver at phone number listed above.

Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:

2018 ~ St. Louis MO
2019 ~ Philadelphia, PA
2020 ~ Atlanta, GA
2021 ~ Detroit, MI
2022 ~ Houston, TX

CALL FOR PHOTOS

If you would like your loved one's photo included in our TCF Chapter's December 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.

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.

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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***

Jordan Robert Barranco, son of Juan and Elizabeth Barranco, who was born on October 30th

Brian Lynn Blecha, son of Lynn and Alice Blecha, died October 15th

Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, born on October 29th

Monty Brentlinger, son of Don and Carolyn Brentlinger, who died October 21st



Skylar Callahan, son of Gena Callahan, brother of Branden, Alex, Chris and Jacob, who was born on November 4th and died on October 30th

Seth Austin Carney, son of Clay and Michelle Carney, died October 13th

Kristi Diaz, daughter of Julie Diaz, born November 7th

Gerald (Jerry) Eberhardt, son of Duane and Mary Eberhardt, who died October 25th

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, born October 20th

Mitchell Hermreck, son of Dennis and Ann Hermreck; brother of Shelby and Raegan, who was born on October 14th

Jeffrey Hoium, son of Mel and Helen Hoium, died on November 12th

Steve Isley, son of Web and Jeanette Isley, died November 6th

Karen Kay Karnes, daughter of Wilson and Maxine Karnes, who died November 19th

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who died on October 1st



Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who died on November 21st

Ben Lake, grandson of Patty Lake, who died on November 29th

Jessica Rae Meyer, daughter of James Robert Meyer and Jennifer Jean Meyer, and sister of Rebecca Meyer, born October 27th; died November 16th

Janet Pace, daughter of Barbara Hale, sister of Carla Gilbert and Sara Wallo, and mother of Shauna Andersen, who was born October 9th

Robin Lynn Paulson, daughter of Frank and Brenda Bissey and sister of Brad Bissey, born October 8th

Kiley Ramey, daughter of Gary and Linda Ramey, who died November 24th



Adam J. Reams, son of Gene and Sandy Reams; brother of Nick Reams, who was born on November 24th

Sarah N. Rice, daughter of Gary and Peggy Rice, who died on October 6th

Brian Keith Robinson, son of Vernon and Pauline Robinson, born October 3rd; died October 13th

Luke Rojas, son of Wilma W. Rojas, born October 22nd, and died October 29th

Abbey Rubottom, daughter of Darcey Evans, who was born on October 23rd

Patrick Sprowl, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sprowl, born October 18th

Jeffery Alan Steinbock, son of Joe and Anne Steinbock, who died October 11th



Louis Walter and Teresa Caolina Stroble-Bernal, son and daughter of Raja Stroble and Beatriz Bernal, stillborn on November 1st

Jason R. VanDam, son of Will and Kay Hasty, died November 5th

Donald (Donnie) Warren, son of Nancy McCune, who was born on November 26th

Eric Edward Gordon Wiebler, son of David and Laura Wiebler, born November 15th

Richard Wilson, son of Kathrine Susan Whittington, who died November 10th

(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 October and November.

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

The Boys & Girls of Summer



The boys and girls of summer,
No longer in our sight
Those sun-kissed happy faces
Now fill our dreams at night.

Long years ago they played and swam
Their laughter echoed along the lake.
Fishing, camping and firelight talks,
Youthful dreams of the life they'd make.
Those boys and girls of summer,
Now swim on a distant shore.
The memory of their faces,
Bring summer's joy to the fore.
Boys and girls of another time
Now crowd the sands at the lake.
Laughing, splashing, in sun and spray,
Unaware of hearts that watch and ache.

~Arleen Simmons

“Those of us who have worked through our grief
-- and found there is a future -- are the ones who
must meet others in the valley of darkness and
bring them to the rim of the light.”

~Rev. Simon Stephens, TCF Founder



September Song

*The school bells ring, young voices sing
And small ones shout with glee.
The autumn air beckons school to start
and left alone is me.
What makes me feel so down and blue
and boggled down with thoughts of you?
I see the school bus passing by
and find myself with a tear in my eye.
Is it the clothes we can't buy,
while others grab the jeans to try?
Or is it autumn in the air
that pulls at heartstrings --already bare?*

*Maybe it's the falling leaves
and dying grass,
bringing reflections like a looking glass?
Whatever the reason that stirs my heart,
every year when school must start,
reminds me how much I miss you.*

Forever loved - Forever remembered

~ Barbara Williams, TCF/Fort Worth, IN



The Beautiful Name of Parent

People often ask why there is not a word for someone who has lost a child. For me the answer is quite simple; I am and always will be a parent. The death of our child does not take that precious title away from any of us. Nothing and no one can ever change the fact that we are parents. We gave life to, nurtured and raised our children, for however long or short their lives were.

“Parent” is a living word. It is an eternal word. Our children would want us to remember that we are their parents now and forever. They would want the name “parent” that was bestowed on us at their birth to live on in our hearts.

We are still actively parenting our children. We continue to bring life to our children by loving them now and forever. There is not and should never be a word to signify the endless love of a parent.

~Janet G. Reyes, TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

A Special and Important Message to Our New Compassionate Friends

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least **three** tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel your grief journey, and most assuredly, you will find hope along the way. We truly care about you and want to make certain that no bereaved parent ever needs to walk this path alone.

---Topeka TCF Chapter Steering Committee

Additional Support Group Resources

HEALs - Healing after loss of suicide offers support to all survivors affected by the loss of a loved one to suicide. Meetings are at 6:30-8:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Pozez Center (north side of Stormont Vail). Contact Information: Sandy Reams 785-249-3792 or email TopekaHeals@gmail.com

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Pozez Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email 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.



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.

TCF Suicide Survivors Facebook Page

Compassionate Friends has a new Facebook page: TCF - Loss to Suicide. This page is open to parents, grandparents and siblings who have lost loved ones to suicide. There is no good way to lose a loved one; different causes create specific pain that can be eased sharing with another experiencing a similar loss. Co-moderators, Cathy Seehuetter and Donna Adams welcome you to this special closed page. To join you may go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/Online_Support/survivors_of_suicide.aspx

The 5 Stages of Grief and Other Lies That Don't Help Anyone

By Megan Devine

The stages of grief were developed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross over 30 years ago, as she listened to and observed people living with terminal diagnoses. Since the publication of her book *On Death and Dying*, the “stages of grief,” as they are known, have become the gauge by which all grief is measured. What began as a way to understand the emotions of the dying became a way to strategize grief: The griever is expected to move through a series of clearly delineated stages, eventually arriving at “acceptance,” at which time their “grief work” is complete.

Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

I bet you know what the stages are, even if you don't think of yourself as much of a psychology-type person. The stages are taught in introductory college courses, and were taught back when I was in hospice training. The stages are taught in grief and loss workshops. They come up in pop psychology and in clinical, scientific studies. The stages of grief are everywhere.

This means that many people, even professional psychologists, believe there is a right way and a wrong way to grieve, that there is an orderly and predictable pattern that everyone will go through, and if you don't progress correctly, you are failing at grief. You must move through these stages completely, or you will never heal.

This is a lie.

Death and its aftermath is such a painful and disorienting time. I understand why people — both the griever and those witnessing grief — want some kind of road map, a clearly delineated set of steps or stages that will guarantee a successful end to the pain of grief. The truth is, grief is as individual as love: every life, every path, is unique. There is no predictable pattern, and no linear progression. Despite what many “experts” say, there are no stages of grief.

In her later years, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote that she regretted writing the stages the way that she did, that people mistook them as being both linear and universal. Based on what she observed while working with patients given terminal diagnoses, Ms. Ross identified five common experiences, not five required experiences. Her stages, whether applied to the dying or those left living, were meant to normalize and validate what someone might experience in the swirl of insanity that is loss and death and grief.

The stages of grief were not meant to tell you what you feel, what you should feel, and when exactly you should feel it. They were not meant to dictate whether you are doing your grief “correctly” or not. They were meant to normalize a deeply not-normal time. They were meant to give comfort. Ms. Ross' work was meant as a kindness, not a cage. No matter how much the woman herself regretted the misuse of

her stages, they are firmly embedded in our cultural ideas of the right and wrong ways to grieve. The stages are used as a corrective reproach, the process of grief turned into a race: Even the stages themselves are not meant to be lingered in. If someone is identified as being in a stage (especially a messy one, like anger), they need to “get through it” as quickly as possible so they can move on to the end goal of acceptance. Conversely, whatever stage someone is in, they must stay there until they are done, otherwise their grief work will suffer.

For your sake, and the sake of those around you, you must do your grieving fast, do it correctly, and be done.

Except that this isn't how grief goes.

Grief is the natural response when someone you love is torn from your life. It is a natural process: a process of the heart being smashed and broken open, of reality shifting and hurling in place. It cares nothing for order or stages.

The truth is, you can't force an order on pain. You can't make it tidy or predictable. The stages of grief are a net thrown over a fog bank — they help neither to define nor contain.

To do grief “well” depends solely on individual experience. It means listening to your own reality. It means acknowledging pain and love and loss. It means allowing the truth of these things the space to exist without any artificial tethers or stages or requirements.

There is no set pattern, not for everyone and not even within each person. Each grief is unique, as each love is unique. There are no stages capable of containing all the experiences of love and pain. There are no stages of grief.

If we take away this bedrock, what remains? What do we do without those landmarks?

Here are some things to remember:

- There is no finish line. This is not a race. Grief has its own lifespan, unique to you.
- There is no time when pain and grief are completed; you grieve because you love and love is part of you. Love changes, but does not end.
- What will happen, what can happen, as you allow your grief, is that you will move differently with pain. It shifts and changes: sometimes heavy, sometimes light.
- Anger will happen. So will fear, peace, joy, guilt, confusion, and a range of other things. You will flash back and forth through many feelings, often several of them at once.

The 5 Stages of Grief and Other Lies (Cont'd)

• Sometimes you will be tired of grief. You will turn away. And you'll turn back. And you'll turn away. Grief has a rhythm of its own.

• Grief can be absolutely crazy-making. This does not mean you are crazy.

• There is no way to do grief "wrong." It may be painful, but it is never wrong.

Remember that there is no "closure." Grief is part of love, and love evolves. Even acceptance is not final: It continuously shifts and changes.

The truth is, you will seize up in the face of pain and soften into it, again and again, both things in rapid succession, and both things with silence in between. You'll find ways to live inside your grief, and in doing so, it will find its own right place.

Your love, and your grief, are bigger than any stage could ever be. The only way to contain it is to let it be free.

As Ms. Ross said in the last days of her life, "I am more than these five stages. And so are you."

(About the Author: Megan Devine is the author of "Everything is Not Okay," an audio program for grief. You can find her at www.refugeingrief.com. Follow Megan Devine on Twitter: www.twitter.com/refugeingrief)

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/megan-devine/stages-of-grief_b_4414077.html

In Time

When we grieve and hurt, we seem to be more aware of everyone's shortcomings, mistakes and limitations.

When we grieve and hurt, we seem to be less capable of forgiveness and understanding

When we grieve and hurt, we must try to realize that feelings of anger and frustration are natural, and that they are *temporary*.

In time, we will rediscover our ability to understand and forgive many people, not only others in the world around us, but also *ourselves*.

The important word here is "IN TIME"

~ Sascha Wagner, from "The Sorrow and the Light"

THE PROMISE

Your birth brought me star-shine
The moon and the sun;
My wishes, dreams gathered
'round my little one.

My life became sacred
Full of promise and light,
All wrapped in the girl-child
Who brought love at first sight.

The years of your living
Filled with laughter and tears,
Excitement, adventure
Some boredom, some fears,
But ended too quickly,
Ahead of its time
The loss so horrendous,
Such heartbreak was mine.

But from the beginning,
One thought rose so clear:
Never would your death erase
The years that you were here.

I would not be defeated
Or diminished by your death;
I would hang on, learn to conquer,
if it took my every breath.

For if your death destroyed my life,
Made both of our lives a waste,
'twoud deny your life's meaning
and all the love you gave.

I vowed that years of sadness
Would change, with work and grace,
To years of happiness, even joy,
In which you'd have a place.

Memories of you, like shining stars
In the patterns of my soul,
And beacons flashing light and love,
And with them I am whole.

In your honor, I live my life,
Now living it for two.
Through all my life, you too will live.
You lived, you live, you do!

~Genesse Gentry, TCF/Marin County, CA



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



Grieving Parent's Tribute To A Friend

You walk with me, my friend, along my lonely path. Through a tiny thread of light, I see your kind face. My heart warms in your arms as my strength ebbs and flows. And without words, you know what is in my thoughts. When I am so distant and cold, you reach out with your love as I try so hard to be all I was in your eyes! As the winter comes and goes, there is a trickle of hope. My faithful friend, I hold your hand and my footsteps become lighter. You are always there.

As the years pass, shall I learn to hide in the shadows? As I accept your love, a child with sparkling eyes with happy laughter and my pride, my joy, lives in my heart. For all of my life I shall remember the precious love I



knew. To lose the young is to break hearts. When the tears begin to fall, my angel, my friend, comforts me. As I walk slowly, friend, you cast the light of hope and understand my heart. Some will forget my child and I know this

has to be. I may learn to smile again but just for one like you.

My friend for life, I do not know the way; lead and I will follow as I learn to live again. Your footsteps are blessed for I will not forget that you were sent to me. My tears of gentle sorrow are understood by few. The love and compassion that comforts me warms like the sun; the golden light, the ray of hope - for I am not alone. May God Bless You, Friend.

~ Maureen Seymour, TCF, Victoria, Australia

I don't know why...I'll never know why...

I don't have to know why...

I don't like it...I don't have to like it...

What I do have to do is make a choice about my living.

What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.

The choice is mine.

I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did before.

Or I can be destroyed by it, and in turn, destroy others.

I thought I was immortal, my children and my family also, that tragedy happens only to others.

I know now that life is tenuous and valuable.

I choose to go on living, making the most of the time I have.

And valuing my friends and family in a way I never experienced before.

~ Iris Bolton, TCF, North Atlanta

A Promise...

The colors of life change as we go through grief.
We begin black and white;
Then gray settles over us, seeping into our pores,
surrounding us,
Smothering us for a long period of time;
then slowly the colors change.
We may not even be aware of their changing
'til one day we see a rainbow,
And know it was meant for us.

~Faye Harden, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY

Dads and Moms Grieve Differently

By Peter Drury

It's true. Moms and dads do grieve differently. Moms grieve differently from dads. Moms grieve differently from other moms. Dads grieve differently from moms. And dads grieve differently from other dads.

While it is true that dads and moms grieve differently, it is perhaps more true that people grieve differently. For example, if a lesbian couple lost a child via stillbirth, they wouldn't grieve in exactly the same way simply because they are both women. Fathers and mothers grieve differently and similarly. The lesson is, perhaps, to learn to listen to each other; to honor each other's pain without trying to take it away; to hold one another fiercely; and to not get bent out of shape if you're in different moods, modes or zones.

I know of a woman who went out to garage sales and bought cheap dishes so that she could come home and smash them against a brick wall. I know a man who would sit in silence where his daughter was buried. I know a woman who was stir-crazy for days and weeks on end, not able to survive without being in contact with somebody... whether on the phone, the Internet, or face to face. I know a man who played racquetball with his father, every week, and hit the ball as hard as he could, whenever he could. And I know two men who zoomed through red-lights, not because they wanted to get hurt, but because nothing else they did seemed to matter.

Grieving makes different faces, wears different clothes, tries different foods. Grieving grows in us and through us. Grief hurts. Grief heals. Grief loves. Moms and dads grieve differently because of who they each uniquely are. As they would each parent differently a child who lived; they will each parent differently a child who has died.

Make room for one another's grief, for it is sacred.

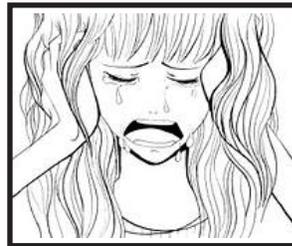


Remembering Our Bereaved Grandparents on Grandparents Day - September 10, 2017

Sobbing Out Loud

After my second child died, I have wept many times, crying quietly - often feeling like the grief would choke me unless I screamed...but I have never been able to even sob aloud again, at least for more than a moment. And since then many grieverers have told me they had much the same experience after death took their child.

I wonder if we should encourage each other to sob out loud or scream. One author suggested closing the windows of one's car and screaming. I am not sure that sobbing alone is probably better than not sobbing at all.



Some cultures deliberately provide grieverers with rituals for sobbing and screaming. Like the women in African villages, or the bereaved mothers of Islam - I always envy them and their traditions of giving sound to their grief.

And what about grieving men? Have we been so "civilized" that we can only weep quietly? Perhaps we should all learn not to sob in silence. Who knows, we might sleep a little better, have fewer headaches, feel less alone, if we could sob out loud?

~ Sascha Wagner from her book *Wintersun*

The End of Summer, the Autumn of Our Healing, and the Harvest of the Heart

September summer has always been a time of nostalgia for me. The days are noticeably shorter with daytime temperatures beginning to cool down and the slightest chilliness of beautiful star filled evenings requiring a sweat shirt or sweater. Early morning streets are filled with children going back to school. Most everyone is finally back to work, relaxed and sharing the adventures and experiences of summer vacations. And then one day, there is a wind from the west. And just by its feel you know these are the last days of summer and that fall will soon gently ease itself into our Rocky Mountains. Before we know it, the canyons are blazing with the fire of fall color working its way down into our valley.

It is a beautiful season and perhaps my favorite time of the year. We can sit for hours in Sugar House Park, watching the birds gather and head south for the winter and enjoy the trees now fully aflame with oranges, browns and reds so beautiful it can make our hearts sing with joy. And yet, with all the beauty that surrounds us, we as bereaved parents sometimes struggle to let it all in. For as summer wanes, and fall begins, our thoughts naturally turn to grammar school homework, high school parties and dances, college football games, shopping for new clothes, and the specter of holidays ahead without those of our children who have too soon been taken from us.

It is difficult to write about this just today. I just went to a wedding of my closest friends' son, where Jacob's cousins, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters and past friends all came together for three days of reunion and celebrations filled with stories of the past. On Sunday, over thirty people were at my place sharing enchiladas and childhood memories of those years we were all together. And of course, the occasional, "I wish Jake were here to see this." For me, not an hour went by that I did not think of him or see his face in his young nephew who bears his name. And yet ... and yet the season, the color, the beautiful days and evenings, the weddings, the parties and football games, and the eminent holidays now fill me with thanksgiving that Jake was part of my life for sixteen years. No small thing that. I consider myself lucky for that much time, for I know so many friends who had much less time with their beloved children. So this year, I choose to find the good and the beautiful of the season, and let the holidays come. For, it is in remembering his face and the goodness of his life and the beauty of the season, I find sweet healing for my grieving soul.

Very soon now, autumn and the harvest season will be upon us, and the bounty of summer's growth will begin to fill our barns and sheds. And this will be an opportunity for us, even though we grieve, to discover the rich harvest of memories with those of our lost children. In their season, they provided us with a bounty of their own. If we are able to accept it, this can be a fall season where we reflect on their abundance of smiles, laughter, humor, growth, learning, and sharing of love. God how we loved them, and how they loved us. Even through all the difficulties, the energetic exchanges of opinions and ideas, the heartaches, the tears, anxiety and disappointments, we cannot avoid the fact that we loved them with a measure beyond our comprehension. And in spite of the difficult times, their sweet and sometimes very short lives provided us with an abundant harvest of experiences that are able, if we let them, to bless us with healing memories to last for as long as we live.

So as we say goodbye to summer, as best we can, let us welcome the fall season and the coming holidays and all the beauty these seasons can and will bring to us. I fully realize that for those of us most recently bereaved, this will be difficult, and in our sorrow

and grief, seem perhaps almost impossible. Please let me reach out my hand and my heart to you in the quiet of your reading this right now.

If you can, imagine I am looking right into your eyes with all the compassion I can muster. And in that moment, I will share your tears, your agony of loss, and your grief, for I am truly one of you. I am after all, and have been a Compassionate Friend for over eleven years now. And as we share this moment, please hear the warmest feelings of my heart as I say to you this wretched agony of grief, this painful time of suffering, and this nightmare and horror you now feel will pass. At some point I promise you will begin to experience the light at the end of this painful tunnel of grief. I promise you will have summers and falls and holidays to come filled with healing memories of your children. I promise as Halloween comes, and you are finally able to turn your porch light on to welcome trick-or-treaters, you will see your own children in the bright and joyful faces at your front door, and smile and be glad they once blessed your life. I also promise the time will come when you will move past Halloween and look forward to Thanksgiving and the December holidays.

As I wrote earlier, I realize this may be too soon for some of you. All I ask is that you be willing to let these most difficult times pass -- as I have promised they will, and allow your hearts to soften and show you their rich places where you still love your children. For it is in those painful, tender places you will begin to find the abundance of love given to you by your children which will bring healing. And when that happens, you will look forward to Thanksgiving day with its abundantly filled table, and realize an equally abundant harvest of the heart.

Whenever we are able to accept it and embrace it, the grace of healing will come to all of us. Of course our lives will never be the same. We will always have the sadness of their absence in our lives and experience those frequent bittersweet times when we simply miss them. But the dark pain and suffering of their passing will itself pass - this I can promise you. For in these past eleven years I have looked into every dark and secret corner of grief, and have spent with you, all those endless weeks and months of intense pain and tears.

I have shared those endless days of self recrimination and regret and anger. And in all this I have finally found the autumn of my healing, and have feasted in the abundant harvest of love. Yes indeed, I promise you the light of joyful memory at the end of this dark tunnel.

So may you look forward to the fall and all its beauty and grace, and anticipate the holidays' peace and joy with a sure knowledge that this present darkness will pass, and that your life will once again be able to embrace the abundance of harvest enjoyed by the rest of your family and friends. And along with Rabbi Harold Kushner, who wrote the book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People, be able to say as he did of his own son's life and death, "... I think of Aaron and all that his life taught me, and I realize how much I have lost and how much I have gained. Yesterday seems less painful, and I am not afraid of tomorrow."

~ Erin Silva, TCF, Salt Lake City, UT

*"The journey from grief to hope does not happen swiftly.
But it happens, if you let your heart ride along."*

~Sascha Wagner

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.