



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Quarterly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

April ~ May ~ June ~ 2022
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 25, 2022
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

"The New Me - How Has My Child's Death Changed Me?" - It is a singularly true statement that after the death of our child we will never be the same person again. But who is this "new" person? How has my child's death changed my self-image of who I am? Have the things my child "taught" me during their lifetime, changed me into who I am today? Are these changes for the better? Can I accept who the "new" me has become? Sometimes "searching" for identity following the death of a child can be a challenge for bereaved parents. Let's talk about the possibilities about who we are now and who we want to be in the future.

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 23, 2022
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

"Know Me, Know My Child" - This is an opportunity for all Chapter members to talk about their children. All are encouraged to bring a picture, poem, song, favorite toy, piece of clothing, etc. and share it with the group as they talk about their beloved child. We feel it is important to not only know each other, but to know who our children were, that our children lived and made an impact and a difference. While tears may flow at this program, it offers us a chance to do what we need most--remember and talk about our child in an atmosphere of caring and acceptance.

JUNE MEETING

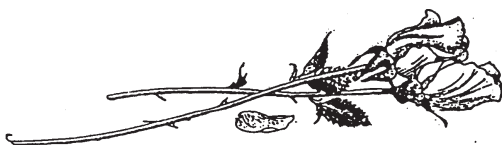
Monday, June 27, 2022
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

"Men to the Right, Women to the Left" - During this program, the entire group has our opening together. Following the preliminaries, we split into groups by sex to discuss issues that are gender-specific. We have found that this is a very helpful program for both men and women, but especially for the men. In a same-gender group they seem to feel more at ease in expressing anger, guilt, frustration etc. The women also found that they felt freer to discuss concerns they have had with their spouses in dealing with their child's death in an all-woman group. Depending on the age of the participants, the age of their deceased child, and how far along they are in their grief - the issues discussed may vary.

Meetings are always held on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted. Listen to radio & TV for cancellations due to severe weather conditions. Always check the Topeka TCF Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) under "Meetings" for latest information.

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purposes are to promote and aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experience following the death of a child of any age, from any cause; and to foster the physical and emotional health of all bereaved parents, grandparents and surviving siblings.

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TCF Mission Statement: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

We Need Not Walk Alone

***We Would Like to Thank the Following for
Sponsoring this Edition of the Newsletter***

*Bert & Elaine Bandstra in loving memory of their
daughter Diane Joy Bandstra who was born on May 24th*

*Susan Bartley in loving memory of her son
Kyle Bartley who died on June 22nd*

*Bob & Kayla Dieball in loving memory of their daughter
Callea Mae Breiner who was born on May 29th*

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

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

*Tom & Mary Sue Kraft in loving memory of their son
Tyler Kraft who was born on April 30th*

*Margaret & Tad Kramar in loving memory of her son
Spenser Thomas Good who died on April 4th*

*Lori & Mark Neddermeyer in loving memory of her
daughter Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill who was
born on June 1st and his son Braden Mark Neddermeyer
who was born on April 7th*

*Austin & Marianna Nothorn in loving memory of their
son Brent Nothorn who was born on June 6th*

*Mike & Valerie Self in loving memory of their son
Nathaniel "Nate" Self who was born on April 21st*

*Damon & Collene Tucker in loving memory of their
daughter Brittany Nicole Tucker who was born April 30th*



Please Note:

If you wish to sponsor the next newsletter (July ~ August ~ September 2022)

we must receive your information and \$30.00 check by June 1, 2022.

Make checks payable to: Topeka TCF Chapter

**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. Pozee 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 Pozee Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email irosen@stormontvail.org. For information call (785) 354-5225.

From Victims to Survivors - Support group for families who have had a loved one murdered. The group meets the fourth or last Wednesday of each month at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4775 S.W. 21st. For more information, call Bill Lucero at 232-5958 or see <http://fromvictimstosurvivors.com>.

New Phone Contact #

**As of 1 January, 2022, the new
phone contact number for the
Topeka Chapter of
The Compassionate Friends is:**

1-785-817-1748

Love Gifts

**Your Love Gifts Help Spread
the Message of Hope & Healing ~ Won't You Help Today?**

What is a Love Gift? A Love Gift is a gift of money (or books, etc.) to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child, grandchild or sibling who has died, but it may be from individuals who wish to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanks that their children are alive, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help. The Compassionate Friends charges *no individual dues* or fees and depends on such Love Gifts to meet the Chapter's expenses, including the printing and mailing of this newsletter. **When you make a donation, make sure to check to see if your employer may have a "matching gifts" program** as this could double the amount of your donation. If you are not sure whether your company has such a program, check with your Personnel Department. This month we thank the following:

♥ *Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter Teresa Jenkins Carson
who was born on April 4th and who died on June 17th*

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

♥ *Margaret & Tad Kramar in loving memory of her son Spenser Thomas Good who died on April 4th*

♥ *Don & Julie Strathman in loving memory of their son Keith Strathman
who was born September 10th and died January 9th*

Your gifts enable us to print this newsletter and reach out to newly bereaved families. Donations are our only source of income and are **tax deductible**. If you would like to sponsor a newsletter, the cost is \$30.00. If we have more than one sponsor, we recognize all of them. If you wish to send a Love Gift, any amount is appreciated. It is whatever you feel you can give. Donations of books that you have found helpful to the Topeka Chapter Library are also greatly appreciated, and it is a nice way to remember your child or other loved one. If you would like to send a Love Gift or a Newsletter Sponsorship, you may do so by sending it to: The Compassionate Friends, c/o Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. For Newsletter Sponsorships, please indicate which issue you wish to sponsor (Jan/Feb/March, April/May/June, July/August/September, October/November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".



Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER

- Have you signed up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more participants we have, the more income we can generate. I encourage you to go to www.dillions.com/community-rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity you wish to support. **The Topeka Compassionate Friends Chapter NPO number is TC248.** Once you have done so and have a Dillions Shopper's Card, every time you make a purchase at Dillions a portion of your total will be donated to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program **costs you nothing** and **does not affect your fuel points** for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select Option 3.

Our Thanks to: Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite a portion of the printing cost of this newsletter.

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

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785.272.0070

And We Remember . . .

Because of the potential for the hurtful crime of identity theft, TCF Chapter Newsletters will now only publish the date of a child's birth or death without listing the year of the event. This is a directive from TCF National to protect all TCF members. Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing database will be included in the We Remember section.

APRIL ~

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, who died on April 15th

Teresa Jenkins Carson, daughter of Phillip and Louise Jenkins, who was born on April 7th

Carly Kathleen Cornelison, daughter of Corie Green, who was born on April 17th

Tyler Craft, son of Tom and Mary Sue Craft, who was born on April 30th

Michael Ray Donoho, son of Tammy Collins and Dennis Donoho; and stepson of Edward Collins and Debbie Donoho, who died on April 11th

Dan Evans, brother of Drew Evans, born in April and died on May 21st

Jeff Fitzgibbons, son of Bill and Jean Fitzgibbons, who died on April 8th

Ryan Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on April 24th

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, who died on April 10th

Spenser Thomas Good, son of Margaret Kramar, who died on April 30th

Nathan Harvey, son of Mark and Debi Harvey; brother of Rachel, Amanda and Caleb Harvey; grandson of Velata Tibbs, who died on April 10th

Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who was born on April 22nd

Tabith Krystofosky, sister of Darrell "Bo" Cremer, Jr., who was born on April 11th

Dennis Montgomery, grandson of Janet Hamilton, who was born in April.

Morgan Myers, daughter of Alta and Rocky Myers, who died on April 3rd

Kyle Neidigh, son of Rosemary Robledo, who was born on April 21st

Eric Alan Palmberg, son of Jim and Doris Palmberg, who was born on April 14th

Evan Michael Schuetz, son of Tom and Debbie Schuetz, who died on April 12th

Nathaniel "Nate" Self, son of Mike and Valerie Self, who was born on April 21st

Sydney Diane Tate, daughter of Jeff and Misty Tate, who was born on April 30th

Brittany Nicole Tucker, daughter of Damon and Collene Tucker, who was born on April 30th

Taylor William Clay Watson, son of Terry and Kathy Watson, who was born on April 12th

MAY ~

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

Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, who died on May 6th

Claire Elise Fisher, daughter of Debra Fisher, who was born on May 15th

Randy Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on May 14th

Anthony James Forshee, son of Darren and Gloria Forshee, who died on May 15th

Carter James Friess, son of Jennifer Friess, who died on May 19th

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

Marshall Hille, son of Paula Ackerman, who died on May 16th

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who died on May 7th

Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, who was born on May 8th

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who was born on May 3rd

Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, died May 2nd

Andrew Garrett Lindeen, grandson of Mary J. Lindeen, born May 8th

Rachel Diana Sowers, daughter of Bill and Diana Sowers, who died on May 17th

Christopher Wempe, son of Dan and JoAnn Wempe, who died on May 12th

JUNE ~

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

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

Kale Cauthon, son of Denise Cauthon; brother of Josh and Cam, who was born on June 14th

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

Jeff Darting, son of Gerry and Judy Darting and brother of Sarah 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

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

McKenzie Lucille Hinck, daughter of Lonnie and Kimberly Hinck, who was born on July 21st and died on June 28th

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

Nicholas Kuipers, son of Candi Kuipers; brother of Tayla and Jaythan, who was born on June 19th

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

Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, who was 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, who was born on June 17th

Tracie Nelson, daughter of Shari Brandenburgh, who died on June 7th

Janet Pace, daughter of Barbara Hale, sister of Carla Gilbert and Sara Wallo, and mother of Shauna Andersen died on June 10th

Jeremy Joseph Pechanee, son of Pamela Pechanee, who was born on June 13th

Aurora Mae Philippi, daughter of Chris and Trista Philippi, born and died June 17th

Alexis "Lexie" Diane Salmon, granddaughter of Candy Morgan and Robin Heuer, who was born on July 11th and died on June 5th

Donald (Donnie) Warren, son of Nancy McCune, who died on June 28th

Michael Scott Watson, son of Warren and Beth Watson, who was born on June 4th

*(Use the form below to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing, you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter.)*

And We Remember - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in this section, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email to chanx2@cox.net We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those requesting it. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____

Son __ Daughter __ Grandson __ Grandaughter __ Brother __ Sister __

Date of Birth _____

Date of Death _____

Father _____

Mother _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Note: Please list address and phone #. You will only be contacted if there is a question about your listing.

Is this a change of address for you? (please circle) YES NO

Five Lessons Grief Teaches

*By Maria Housden
Posted on TCF January 4, 2019*

Twenty-two years of grief changes a lot of things. I am a new person every day. I never expected to survive my daughter's death. For months after, I prayed to die. More than once, I considered taking my own life, though I could not leave all I love here.

There is no good way or time to lose a child. When someone you love dies, everything unnecessary falls away. I have learned to see grief as a spiritual practice, and it has taught me to see life in new ways.

TRUTH: telling it and living it

My daughter Hannah died of cancer at the age of three. This is the first true moment in my human story. Everything I am begins with this. The truth of Hannah's death is fierce and unrelenting. I cannot change it, but I can change the way I live with it.

When Hannah died, my life entered a 'no bull sh*t, no drama' zone. I only had time and energy for the few things that mattered. I lost my politeness and learned to tell the truth. I let the phone ring and stopped reading fiction.

Pretending not to grieve does not make our children less dead. When tears are not seen as weakness, sorrow becomes a wise teacher. I also see now that truth is mutable. Truth changes as we change, and it waits until we are ready to see it.

JOY: Finding it in the darkest places

For a long time after Hannah's death, I was afraid to laugh or smile. I didn't want to betray her suffering by feeling happy. As time passed, this feeling lifted. I smiled more and cried less. I noticed signs and synchronicities that reminded me of Hannah.

Joy is fleeting when grief makes a home in your life. I learned to find it in the darkest places. Saying 'yes' at the moment reveals unexpected happiness. I rarely make plans ahead of time now, as I can't be certain how I will feel. This way of seeing allows us to release the need for everything to be perfect. Joy is the possibility

of happiness in every moment, the feeling that we are right where we need to be.

FAITH: from "my will be done" to "thy will be done"

Three months after Hannah's death, I stood by the side of a road, prepared to take my own life. I was not afraid of death; no matter what happens Hannah is already there. As a truck approached, I suddenly became aware of my lungs breathing. I forgot about the truck and focused on my breath. I realized that something in me is still choosing life. I stayed alive to find out why. There are no words to describe the space left absent when a child dies. The love you feel has nowhere to go. The longer your child is gone, the more you miss them. This missing becomes a part of you. In my grief, I began to explore other religions and belief systems, hungry for validation of life after death. The God I believe in now is not the God that I grew up with. Though Christianity remains the first language of my faith, I now see threads of truth connecting many understandings. For me, God is a force of a thousand names and one love. Hannah's spirit lives on as part of everything.

Strange comfort this holding of everything in one place. Yet I see an intelligence beyond imagining which orchestrates life and nature. While it is painful to accept Hannah's death, I also see her life making a difference in this world. Someone once described the Earth as the planet for slow-learners. Faith trusts and breathes when it's all we can do.

COMPASSION: from specialness to belonging

I do not know why Hannah died and other children didn't. At first, I felt a sense of specialness. No one could know the depth of my pain. For a while, I didn't want to speak with anyone unless they had lost a child. Gradually, I began to connect with other people.

Forgiveness is key throughout the journey of grief: forgiveness of those who live and of those who die. As I learn to forgive myself, I find it easier to forgive others. Our intent in harnessing grief makes transformation possible. 'Grief' shares the same root as 'grave,' 'gravity,' and 'gravitation.' It is a force with weight. Once engaged, it can be redirected.

When Hannah was first diagnosed, one of her doctors

gave us good advice. He said, "Remember, no matter what happens, make the best decision you can with the information you have AT THAT TIME." Of course, we would change things if we knew then what we know now.

There is no solace in blaming ourselves and others for not knowing.

Although I sometimes have less patience for other people and their problems, I see each of us is a unique lens in a shared experience. Compassion softens our gaze and allows us to appreciate new perspectives. When we reach beyond our specialness, we realize we are not alone.

WONDER: from needing to know to letting go

There was a house in our little town which was painted pink from top to bottom. Hannah loved this house. In the last year of her life, each time we passed it, she would say, "That's where I am going to live!"

A year and a half after Hannah's death, my daughter Madelaine was born. One day, when Madelaine was almost three-years-old, we were driving to the grocery store. Suddenly Madelaine started shrieking from the back seat, I turned to see what was happening and saw her pointing to the pink house. "Mommy," she exclaimed, "That's the house where Hannah and I played in heaven before I was born!"

I had no idea how she knew, and in that moment I didn't need to. Hannah's death opened me to realms I never knew existed. Having watched my Father and my daughter take their last breaths, I remember a peaceful presence entering the room. This energy called life is where I feel our children's presence is, and their spirits still make themselves known.

About the Author:

Maria Housden is a lecturer and author of HANNAH'S GIFT: Lessons From A Life Fully Lived (Bantam 2002) and Unraveled (Harmony Books 2005). She has been featured on the Today Show and Dr. Phil. Her first book, HANNAH'S GIFT, the story of her daughter's life and death from cancer, is being made into a full-length feature film and is translated in 16 languages.

Valley of the Butterflies

*There is a green sun-drenched valley
Light with the scent of clover and lilacs
Where the butterflies dance.
Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors
Of every hue and dimension.
There are monarchs and skippers,
Swallowtails and delicate spring azures.
Each dances its unique pattern
Of flits, circles and dives.
Stretching its fragile wings toward the clouds
Or brushing its feet on the succulent grass.
There are no roads, paths, or gates
To broach the valley's entrance;
Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams.
Every parent who has sent forth a child
and vainly waited for its return
Comes seeking in the valley of the butterflies
And there finds a beautiful spirit,
Stretching its wings to the clouds
and brushing its feet on the grass,
Dancing in swoops, flits and dives,
Drying its dewey wings in the warm sunshine
of forever.*



~ Marcis Alig, TCF, Princeton Jct., NJ

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. If you have chosen the e-newsletter option, please keep me aware of any email address changes.

Online Support Communities: An Important Way That We're Here for our TCF Family.

One of the most far-reaching and valuable ways that we offer support to TCF members is through our online chat and private Facebook groups. With over 286,000 followers on our main Compassionate Friends USA Facebook page, we also offer over 40 different private Facebook groups serving 102,000 members collectively. Additionally, TCF offers chat rooms that provide a space for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings to meet every day to connect, share, and support each other. To find support via an online group of The Compassionate Friends, please visit <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/.../online-communities/>.

How To Access To Compassionate Friends Facebook Groups

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

For individual groups within Facebook, please go to compassionatefriends.org or use key word "Compassionate Friends". Click on Find Support then click On-Line Communities then click on View Groups or click on Resources then click on 24/7 Private Facebook Groups. The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so we can confirm your request. If you are waiting approval, please message one of the administrators. Join requests to our Facebook groups must be requested personally, therefore when you wish to share the group with someone please pass along the link to the group.

Accessing Brochures/E-Newsletter

To access various brochures on dealing with various aspects of grief go to compassionatefriends.org or use key word "Compassionate Friends." Click on Resources then click Brochures Available. You can also register for the national e-newsletter at this site also.

*Crying is a way your eyes
speak when your mouth
can't explain how
broken your heart is.*

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of "Bereaved Parents". But for now--right now- it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss, to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt and anger, and to release their well of tears.

Wounded hearts need too be wrapped in quietness, gentleness and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life. A wounded heart not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony will be an abscess - to swell and undermine - erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, it will slowly choke the spirit of its host.

Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed. The wounded heart, encouraged and given time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memories and shared love of a precious child.

~ Nancy G., TCF, Livonia, MI

"Somewhere"

*Somewhere in the troubled night,
When you fight the lonely fight,
Will you but remember then,
I am at your side again.
As I was in other days
When we traveled better ways.
True, I cannot touch your hand,
But I know you understand.
Love is not a thing of place,
Only standing face to face.
Love is, too, a thing of heart,
And though we're dwelling far apart,
There is never far from here.
Here is never far from there,
To the ones who really care.
So, if you loved me, do not grieve,
Those who love, also believe.
If you need me, do but call.
I am with you, after all.*

~ Author Unknown, Found in the book
"Out of the Valley" by the late Richard Elder

FATHER'S DAY

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong -- must not cry. But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And, inside, we must ask ourselves about our failure, and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer-standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father it is a poignant reminder of bitter sweetness: sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost, child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of inability to stop what happened.

Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Often times they are unable to do so, a remnant of childhood learnings about the strength and stoicism of "big boys." A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife, and the wife who pushes him to talk may be pushing too hard.

Father's Day does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked, Let's do it now." But it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug, does something special, helps with the chores, and mostly, lets him know how important and needed and loved he is. It is some of these things that he has lost with the death of a child. And, like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to a Sunday in June, It can be any day and every day.

Fathers often show their hurts differently, often internally, BUT THEY DO HURT.

~ Gerry Hunt
TCF, White River Junction, VT

A Rose

*Sunlight dancing in the branches
of the birch tree at my door.
Meadow stretching smug and lazy,
darker, greener than before.
Wind as calm as hugging children,
clouds so round and very close,
And, on one small grave there trembles
lovingly, an early rose.*

~ Sascha Wagner

Mother's Day Again

It is Mother's Day again.
The day that my firstborn son became an angel.
Time for remembering Mothers
Time to remember their love for their children
For me it is a reminder of the day you
became an angel
And a piece of my heart went with you
Yes, it is Mother's Day again.

It is Mother's Day again.
Time for me to put on my happy face
Time to celebrate me
Time to enjoy my daughter
Tell her how much I love her
Also time for me to remember
My beautiful son who has gone too soon
Pray he knows how much I love him
Yes, it is Mother's Day again.

It is Mother's Day again
I will remember the good times with Kevin
I will remember his smiles
I will remember his hugs
I will remember his firsts
but I will remember most of all
His love for me, his sister and his daddy.
So yes, it is Mother's Day again.

~ Kathie Kelly TCF Fredericksburg, VA

Daffodils

Daffodils are heart-warmingly beautiful, spring-like, colorful. Yet they must break through the dark, dry ground to blossom and share their beauty with us. Bereaved parents are much like these daffodils. This spring, you might not be in full glory, but we promise you a future spring, in full bloom once more!



~ Betty Stiegelmeier, TCF
Pike's Peak, CO

Warning: Grief Side - Effects May Include Building Emotional Walls

Until you lose someone, you may not really “get” the love-grief connection thing. Or you maybe get it intellectually, but you don’t get it emotionally. Then one day it hits you like a ton of bricks. You realize that when you love someone so deeply and entirely, losing that person means losing pieces of yourself, and it means your world shattering. Grief is in many ways the price we pay for love, they do grow from the same seeds, and as beautiful as that can sound, in especially dark moments that connection can be dangerous.

On your worst days the realization that the source of the deepest, most unimaginable pain you have ever felt is there because you loved someone so deeply, can be scary. Really really scary. It means that any other deep love can be the source of deep pain and loss. It is human nature to avoid and protect ourselves from pain, so what are we supposed to do when we realize that opening ourselves to love means opening ourselves up to pain? The self-protective instinct in us sometimes kicks in and suddenly, standing in the rubble of grief and loss, we just want to protect ourselves from ever feeling pain like this again. We can sometimes start stacking that rubble up around us to a build wall. It is a wall built on the sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, thought: *if grief is the price we pay for love, it isn't a price I am willing to pay*. So we start to distance ourselves from love. This can take different shapes, but some common experiences are:

1. Distancing yourself from the people who are already in your life that you love and care about.
2. You refuse to open myself up to new people, for fear you will ultimately just end up being hurt.
3. You detach from the world around you in general, becoming emotionally numb to avoid setting yourself up to care about something and lose it.

It is human nature to avoid pain, so no judgment if this is something that has been part of your grief. It doesn’t impact everyone, but it certainly impacts some. If you realize love can, down the road, be a source of not just a little pain, but A LOT of pain, it is no surprise you may develop an instinct to avoid love. Just reading those words – “avoid love” – is hopefully an indication of why these emotional walls can be problematic. Yes, they emotionally protect us from grief. But this also prevents from connection, intimacy, hope, joy, and so many other things that make the world a place we want to live. So what’s a griever to do?

Tactic One: Remember, it doesn’t have to be all or nothing. You can take it slow. For example, after losing a baby (or sometimes multiple babies) to miscarriage or stillbirth, it isn’t uncommon to build a wall and say “I am never trying again” from a place of self-protection. If you have decided to look at walls you may have built, it doesn’t mean overnight saying, okay, I am going to try to get pregnant again. It may mean saying, I am going to open myself to the idea or possibility. I am not going to say “I will try”, I am not going to say “I will not try”. Instead, I will not rule anything out, I will do some self-reflection and slowly ease into decisions on how to move forward to make sure they are not part of a problematic emotional wall.

Tactic Two: Address avoidance. Sometimes you don’t even realize the reason you have been avoiding people, places, or things is because you have been building walls. This requires a little self-assessment. If you have been creating distance between people and things that were meaningful to you before your loss, take some

time to reflect on what that is all about. It isn’t always about an emotional wall, but it can be, so it is important spending some time with the idea.

Keep in mind, avoidance doesn’t always mean you have cut everyone out of your life and are spending all your time alone. Sometimes we swap out inner-circle people, who we love and care about most, for acquaintances. This can be a protective way of having contact but with people who feel “safer” because they do not require you to be as vulnerable to love and potential loss.

Tactic Three: Be mindful of making radical relationship changes quickly. I was in a fairly serious, but relatively new relationship when my dad died. I found my journal from that time recently and read through many thoughts I had about ending the relationship despite the fact that it was a wonderful and supportive relationship. As I peeled through the layers trying to figure out what was going on, it was clear after losing my dad the thought I could lose this person too was too much to handle. It felt safer to end the relationship on my own terms at that moment to control my hurt, rather than get further emotionally invested and risk greater hurt. I am very grateful now I worked through that and didn’t end the relationship, but it was definitely an emotional wall I was trying to build. Even without ending the relationship I did still create an emotional distance that took some time to resolve.

Sometimes grief gives us a new lens to see the world. Sometimes that means we see relationships, friendships, jobs, priorities differently and we make changes for the better. But sometimes it is the fear and anxiety lens pushing us to close ourselves off from people or things we actually deeply care about. It is important to look closely and do a lot of self-assessment about what is going on when you have that inclination to make big emotional changes after a loss.

Tactic Four: Acknowledge the reality of potential loss and hurt. Now, you may be screaming, I KNOW the potential for loss and hurt, I have gone through it, and that’s what brought me here! But when we build these walls we don’t always consciously realize we are doing it to mitigate our anxiety around future pain and loss. Facing that thought head on and considering the reality of grief and loss is part of being vulnerable and taking steps towards opening back up. We can’t avoid these anxieties because they will keep creeping up, so at some point we must consciously face them. If you try to face these anxieties and find yourself stuck, this may be an important reason to see a counselor.

Tactic Five: Learn tools for coping with anxiety. No surprise, coping with anxiety and fear around experiencing hurt again is an important part of opening yourself back up and tearing down emotional walls. There are lots of general tools and techniques. We have a post on grief and anxiety on our website. But if this is a significant issue for you, seeing a counselor can make a big difference in learning specific coping tools that will work well for you.

Tactic Six: Acknowledge what you are missing. It is easy to feel like it is safer to stay protected inside the safety of your emotional walls and ignore all the things you may be missing on the other side. To find the inspiration, motivation, and hope required to take a risk and push yourself outside those walls, it is important to consider what is out there that you are missing by closing yourself off. Especially in the early days of grief it can feel like none of those things are worth the potential pain of loss. But as time goes on, you find ways to manage anxiety, and you reflect on things you may be missing through avoidance and emotional walls, it can start to feel easier. You can slowly begin to open yourself up to love and hope, even with the knowledge that from the same seeds that grow love, grief may someday grow. ~ www.whatsyourgrief.com

Happy Birthday, Braden Mark Neddermeyer & Madison "Maddie" Rae Nail



Braden and Maddie celebrating their last birthdays in 2021 and 2011 with purple trimmed cake – forever ages 29 and 15.



Braden and Maddie always had so much fun together

We miss you on your birthdays. You two had as much fun together as you spent "fighting", and competing in video games - just like siblings do. Now, you are together looking down here hoping we will all just go tubing or fishing now and then!

Braden - Love, Dad, Lori, Mom, Ken, Cale, Allie, Madison, Kayson, Grandma & Grandpa Neddermeyer, Ginny, Bruce, Lisa, Grandma Laura, plus all of your aunts, uncles & cousins

Maddie - Love, Mark, Mom, Dad, Veronica, Cale, Allie, Kayson, Grams, Gramps, Grandma Laura, Grandma Marge & Grandpa Allan, plus all of your aunts, uncles & cousins



Cap and Gown

Not to see you in your cap and gown will always pain me. So many dreams will never be fulfilled...never realized...wasted on a highway far from home. Of your accomplishments we become more aware...taken so for granted...so much a part of you we anticipated them just as we expected you to ever walk in the door. Now we live wrapped in wonder...would things be different if you'd lived? Life is not the same now that you are gone. You died a boy...what would you be like as a man? We never knew you to be angry, moody, dissatisfied. The world was meant to be explored, tasted, experienced. Would the world have changed you? Would there be love in your life, would you have reached the goal to which you had aspired for so long? The years have passed but every graduation announcement that arrives in the mail brings on a hurt like a giant intestinal rupture!



How would you have looked in your cap and gown?

~ Gean Lipson, TCF, Grand Junction, CO

You Live On

You live on in your older sister's smile
your younger brother's humor
and in the way your baby sister
squeezes out of her car seat
as I look for a place
to pull over on the highway.

You live on in the heart of your dad
in the heart of me, your mom,
when we eat only the inside of egg rolls,
pancakes swimming in syrup,
soggy bowls of cereal
and pick croutons out of a salad.

You live on when we choose
not to make mountains out of mole hills,
give to the charities,
whisper "I love you",
find beauty in the dusty toad
in your garden.

You live on, my child,
here on this earth every day
and we anticipate when we will live again,
with you in eternity.

~ Alice J. Wisler
TCF, Raleigh, NC

One Moment in Time

As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives. This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that one big career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives, things are different. We are not like other people.

We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be the same. We definitively mark the time before and after our child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy; it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments, setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions were shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we will feel balanced, optimistic and serene?

We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true sunshine as time moved forward. How did they do it?



Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF meetings or other offerings that give us the support of parents who have lost a child or help us in acquiring skills to cope with our pain and loss.

We must take grief breaks in the beginning and for the first year or two. We must take care of ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

But most of all we must keep our child with us as we complete our life's journey. How we choose to complete our journey is unique. The common denominator that all of us share is the need to find a precious flicker of hope which we can nurture and coax to a radiant glow. We all find it in different ways and at different times on our grief journey. But, rest assured, we all find it. I call it "my little light."

One day you will feel the burden lifting. You will laugh about things your child said or did. That moment will gently envelop you. There is hope. Let your little light glimmer and then glow.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin is a member of the Katy, Texas Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. She lost her son, Todd.

The Compassionate Friends

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

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings.

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TCF Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us.
Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.
We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief,
but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share,
just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together.
We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace,
share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.