



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Quarterly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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NEWSLETTER - Volume 7, Issue 3
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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcfpeka.org

July ~ August ~ September ~ 2022
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629

JULY MEETING

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

“What Do I Do With My Anger?” - Every parent who has a child die will probably experience anger--some will experience intense anger that may frighten and confuse them. Others will not recognize the anger they may be feeling but are taking it out on others around them in inappropriate ways. We will discuss the fact that parents have every right to be angry that this terrible thing has happened to them, but that we need to acknowledge our anger and find safe outlets for its expression. We will talk about being angry with members of the medical community, the drunk driver, our child for making bad choices, even God.

AUGUST MEETING

Monday, August 22, 2022
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

“Unexpected Sadness” - Just when you feel as though you are doing “better”, you are caught by a wave of unexpected sadness. It doesn’t have to come on a special day like a birthday, death anniversary or other holiday. It can, and usually does come “out of the blue” and brings you down emotionally. How can we best deal with these times of unexpected or unanticipated sadness, will they always happen, can we “see” them coming? The group can discuss their experiences with such times of sadness, how they handled it at the time, how they cope with it now, etc.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Monday, September 26, 2022
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

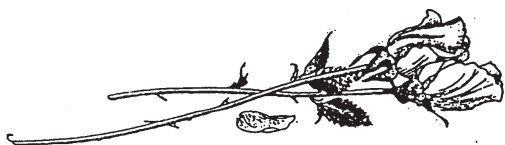
“Triggers” - Triggers are sights, words, events in our surroundings and daily activities that touch our grief and bring it to the surface in sometimes uncontrollable ways. Triggers can be memorabilia, places, objects, songs, smells, people, or anything that brings back memories. Let’s talk about what our “triggers” are, how they affect us, and how we handle them. Are your “triggers” always painful or do they sometimes bring pleasant memories to mind? This meeting offers us the opportunity to discuss our “triggers” and the part they may play in our individual grief journeys.

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.tcfpeka.org) under “Meetings” for latest information.

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

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



We Need Not Walk Alone

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

*Don & Susan Arnold in loving memory of their
son Matthew Wayne Arnold who was born on July 28th*

*Bert & Elaine Bandstra in loving memory of their
daughter Diane Joy Bandstra who died on July 28th*

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

*Penny Lumpkin in loving memory of her son
William Henry "Hank" Lumpkin who died on August 19th*

*Ralph & Judy Lundin in loving memory of their
daughter Amy Lundin who died on July 28th*

*Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of his son
Braden Mark Neddermeyer who died on August 18th*

*Don & Julie Strathman in loving memory of their
son Keith Strathman who was born on September 10th*



Please Note:

If you wish to sponsor the next newsletter (October ~ November ~ December 2022)

we must receive your information and \$30.00 check by September 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. 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 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:

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

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

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:
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www.compassionatefriends.org

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TOPEKA, KS 66604
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And We Remember . . .

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

JULY ~

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

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

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

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

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

Dennis Montgomery, grandson of Janet Hamilton, who died in July.

Colby Deab Harris, son of Chris and Dana Harris; grandson of Marquita Baxter and Mary K. Harris, who died on July 21st

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

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

Riley Kern, son of Emily Kern and brother of Mary Gifford, who died on July 27th

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

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

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

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

Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, who was born on July 26th

Kadillak Marie Poe, granddaughter of Cindy Poe, who died on July 24th

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

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

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

Rachel Diana Sowers, daughter of Bill and Diana Sowers, who was born on July 30th

Tony Stewart, son of Barbara Stewart, who died on July 2nd

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

Tony Willey, son of Diana Willey, who was born on July 3rd

AUGUST ~

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

Tyler James Baker, son of Barbara Baker, who was born on August 2nd

Jon Bieker, brother of Andrea Smith; son of Don & Sheryl Bieker who was born on August 5th

Rebecca Lynne Smith Crismas, daughter of BobbyJean Smith, who was born on August 13th

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

Wendi Sue Cushing, daughter of Scott and Denise Cushing; sister of Deana and Dylan Cushing, died on August 9th

Jeffrey Darrell Darting, son of Gerry and Judy Darting and brother of Sarah Escobar and Jenny Darting, died on August 29th

Kimberly Melissa Dickinson, daughter of Curtis and Debbi Dickinson, stillborn on August 25th

Caleb Zachary Engell, son of Joe & Melody Engell, who was born on August 6th and died on August 15th

Carter James Friess, son of Jennifer Friess, who was born on August 11th

Jeremy Scott Goehl, son of Danny and Kim Goehl; brother of Jason Goehl, who was born on August 29th

Tyler Grame, son of Amanda Grame and brother of Brendan and Jacob Grame, who was born on August 9th and died on August 18th

Rex McCarthy, son of Janet Hamilton, who was born in August.

Juliet Faith Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, who died on August 25th

Colby Dean Harris, son of Chris and Dana Harris; grandson of Marquita Baxter and Mary K. Harris, who was born on August 10th

Clara Harrington Jones, daughter of Mary Harrington and John Jones, born and died on August 26th

Riley Kern, son of Emily Kern and brother of Mary Gifford, who was born on August 4th

Joel Andrew Knight, son of Jim and Gloria Knight, who died on August 23rd

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

Nicholas Artck McCarthy, son of Sabrina Cruz, who died on August 19th

Sharis Thompson Meyer, daughter of Gary and Margaret Thompson who died on August 25th

Russ Moreland, son of Barb Moreland, who was born on August 24th

Morgan Myers, daughter of Alta and Rocky Myers, who was born on August 20th

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

Morgan Marie Pollak, daughter of David and Shelley Pollak; granddaughter of Mark and Linda Marling, born on August 14th and died on August 27th

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

Brandon Toler, son of Marty Tyson, who was born on August 18th

SEPTEMBER ~

Charlie Allen, son of Tanya Allen, who died on September 18th

Alexander Birchmeier, son of Khristine Henderson, who was born on September 11th; and died on September 19th

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, born on September 17th

Aaron M. Campbell, son of Marilyn Campbell, who was born on September 6th

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

Carly Kathleen Cornelison, daughter of Corie Green, who died on September 15th

Ashley Brooke Dickinson, daughter of Curtis and Debbi Dickinson, stillborn on September 3rd

Gerald (Jerry) Eberhardt, son of Duane and Mary Eberhardt, born September 1st

Caleb Zachary Engell, son of Joe & Melody Engell, who was born on August 6th and died on August 15th

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

Juliet Faith Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, born on September 2nd

Jonathan Kaspar, son of Jeffrey and Susan Kaspar; sister of Jen Kaspar, who was born on September 17th

Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, born on September 14th

Belinda Meier, daughter of Maggie Walshire, who was born on September 14th

Sharis Thompson Meyer, daughter of Gary and Margaret Thompson, born on September 15th

Krystil M. Pearson, daughter of Patti Cox and sister of Kendall Pressler, who died on September 24th

Kadillak Marie Poe, granddaughter of Cindy Poe, who was born on September 4th

Abbey Rubottom, daughter of Darcey Evans, who died on September 15th

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

Cory Sprecker, brother of Chelsea Sprecker, who died on September 26th

Keith Strathman, son of Don and Julie Strathman, brother of Becky Strathman, born on September 10th

Dawn Lee Wilson, daughter of Don J. and Dixie Lee Wilson, born on September 19th

*(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 Avee., 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

The Gifts of Grief

By Donna Goodrich

*Posted on March 4, 2019
The Compassionate Friends Website
www.compassionatefriends.org*

First, let me make a statement: anything positive or any gift we may receive as a result of our child/children's death we would gladly give back, if only we could have them back with us again. Since that isn't possible, then why not accept and acknowledge the gifts or positives that we may receive as a result of their death? For a bereaved parent, this is very hard to do.

I know what most of you are thinking: "You are crazy! Nothing good can come from the death of my child!" I thought the same thing when I first started my grief journey. I continued on this path of thinking until I attended a TCF National Conference and began rethinking how I was handling my grief.

In my grief journey, I actually had begun to see positives in my life as a result of my children's deaths. But, like a lot of bereaved parents, I did not want to acknowledge that "gifts" or positives could come from my loss. The "gifts" were there just the same, so I began to acknowledge and use them in my "new normal" life – the one without my children. Here are examples of "gifts" you may have received as a result of your child's death.

Following the death of your child, do you remember that one special person who was there for you? They didn't talk; they listened. They didn't give you advice or spout those awful clichés. They were just there, maybe doing a load of laundry or mowing your lawn. They never asked what they could do; they just showed up and did what was needed. They held us when we cried and let us talk about our precious child. This was possibly our first real gift of grief.

One of our next gifts is one we give ourselves—the gift of "courage"—to walk into that first TCF meeting, into a club that no one wants to belong. We didn't want to be in a room of bereaved parents, but our own gift of "courage" helped us to attend that first meeting.

In those first meetings, we should have received our next gift—"hope." We saw parents who had been bereaved for many years. At first, we were concerned about seeing these parents there; will we "still" need to attend TCF meetings five or 10 years from now? Then we heard from these parents that they were there for us; they wanted us to know that they too were as broken as we are now when they first walked through that door. They told us how they managed those difficult days and nights when their child first died. They also showed us that they had found joy in life again and gave us hope that we could too. Most importantly, they were there to walk this journey with us so we did not have to walk alone, and that is such an important gift. The Reverend Simon Stephens,

the founder of TCF, talked about the "Gift of Hope" when discussing TCF: "It is the gift of HOPE which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends. HOPE that life can still be worth living and meaningful. HOPE that the pain of loss will become less acute and, above all else, the HOPE that we do not walk alone, and that we are understood. The GIFT of HOPE is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn."

Our next gifts come at various times in our grief: new relationships in our lives with those who understand our "new normal" because they too have lost a child, and pictures were given to us of our children that we never knew existed. Someone asking us to talk about our child years after their death, when it has been so long since anyone, even family members, have mentioned their names to us is a precious gift as well.

Another gift that is so important to many of us is the gift of "signs" that our child is still nearby. These "signs" come in many different forms: pennies from heaven, dragonflies, butterflies, rainbows, hummingbirds, hawks, cardinals, feathers or deer—just to name a few—showing up at just the right time or at a time when it was totally unexpected. These are such small, insignificant (for some unbelievable) happenings to everyone else. But to a bereaved parent, they are such special gifts, helping us through the darkest of days. Letting us know that our children are still with us—not as we want them to physically be, but they are still with us nonetheless.

Some gifts are actual changes to our own personality: Are you more compassionate than before; do you have a better sense of what matters most in life than you did before; and have your priorities or focus in life changed and now people or causes are more important to you than "things"? Have you ever stopped to think of all the wonderful scholarships, buildings, foundations, and, yes, even TCF, that came to be as the result of a child's death? Yes, we would gladly give back all these gifts just to have our children back, but...

One of the last "Gifts of Grief" that I want to mention is the gift of "Memories of our Child." Many of us can remember what goes through our mind when our child first dies. That "tape" our mind replays every time we try to sleep or rest; the tape of the actual event, of the funeral, of how we heard they were dead or simply that our child is dead. At an early TCF Conference, I heard a very wise lady, Darcie Sims, talk about the fact that our memories of our children change at some point in our grief. At first, when thinking about our children, all that comes to mind is that they died. But later on, we will know we are moving forward in our grief journey when we think of our child and "the first thing we think of is NOT that they died, but that they LIVED, and those memories bring a smile to our face, not tears." I thought I would never get to that point in my grief, but I did and so can you. Death may have taken our children, but death can't take away our memories of them. Those wonderful, perfect, beautiful memories are ours to keep FOREVER.

Whether or not we recognize these gifts, accept and use them, these gifts and the death of our children have reshaped us all to our very core, from this point forward. As one of the Sandy Hook parents said: "You have a choice; let it destroy you or let it strengthen you." Each of us has this choice to make at some point in our grief journey—to stay in the dark days of grief or to try to bring light to our journey and have the memory of our child be one of causing positive changes to ourselves and hopefully, to our world. I hope you can now begin to recognize all the "gifts" you have received.

(About the Author) Donna Goodrich has lost three children; a miscarriage; her son Garth, an identical twin, at birth; and her 17-year-old daughter Lauren in an auto accident. Donna has been involved with TCF for the past 17 years, including Chapter Leader, newsletter editor, 2010 TCF National Conference committee member, conducted nine Chapter Leadership Training Programs in North and South Carolina and Virginia, presented her workshop "Gifts of Grief" at the past four National Conferences, is currently co-Regional Coordinator for both North and South Carolina, Committee member for the 2018 TCF National Conference, and is a moderator for the TCF Closed page "Loss of a Child".

A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain—
it's called "Longing."

I long for what was,
and what might have been

I long for his touch and smell of sweat;
I long to hold him one more time.
I long to look on his beautiful face
and impress it upon my memories and
heart.

I long to return to the day before
and protect him from his death.

I long to take his place,
so he may live and have sons too.
I long for time to pass much faster,
so my longing and pain will lessen.
Will they?

~ June Williams-Muecke
TCF Houston West, TX

Forever Entwined

Losing a child to death is statistically improbable, yet all parents harbor the concept as their worst fear, the stuff of nightmares, cold sweats and anxiety. But when our children die, the anxiety of that possibility pales against the soul wrenching horror of the reality. At first we freeze in time as our focus is on the primal.....breathe, drink water. After the initial shock has ceased to control our every moment, we seek answers. Can I get through this? Do I want to get through this? How have others managed to continue living after their child has died? I have disconnected from my friends and even my family. I don't want to go forward..... the pain is too intense. Death would be a mercy. Life is no longer a joy. My heart is broken. I will never see my child again.

If we are fortunate enough to find a Compassionate Friends Group, we meet people who have taken this nightmare journey.....and survived. Our first meeting is the most difficult.....at my first meeting the only word I could say was my son's name. Later, we tell our story to those have experienced the death of their child and find that talking to kindred souls can be cathartic. If we persevere and continue to attend meetings, get to know other parents, participate in the group discussions, cry with others and smile at the memories of their child.....we begin the healing process.

Now our lives are forever entwined with those of other parents who have lost a child to death. Like the Celtic knot, we are now part of an eternal paradigm: we are strands in the knot, weaving our stories into each others' lives. This interlace of our lives is a permanent and beautiful blending of souls seeking comfort from one another. Our reality is shared by others; we lean on them, they lean on us. We give, we receive.



Many friends from our lives before the death of our child hesitate to mention our child's name and even fear talking about our child's life and listening to our memories. But we don't want to forget our child as that would be the worst betrayal. We want to talk about our child's life and keep their spirit with us always. Those in our lives who do not share this feeling are not part of our eternal paradigm; they will never be entwined with us as we complete our journey on this earth.

The Celtic knot, the symbol of eternity, is symbolic of the relationships we have found at Compassionate Friends. These lives are forever woven into ours, we accept each other's perspectives and share their sorrow and the joy of their memories. There is a place in our Celtic knot for all parents who have lost a child. As other parents join us, they are enfolded forever into the eternal paradigm of healing and compassion.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Braden Mark Neddermeyer 1992-2021



Braden,

We all miss you and the energy you provided to any room, your sense of humor, and the odd attire you selected at times for special events! We especially miss seeing you interact with Kayson.

Love, Dad, Lori, Mom, Ken, Cale, Allie, Madison, Kayson,
your extended family, and so many of your friends
and co-workers. Nothing here will be the same again
without you.



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.

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.

July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
Brilliant colors in the sky.
Their splendor ends in seconds
On this evening in July.
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"
I whisper with a sigh.
She was born this month,
She loved this month
And she chose this month to die.
Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
Glowing briefly in the dark
They are gone too soon, and so was she
Having been, and left her mark.



A glorious incandescent life,
A catalyst, a spark...
Her being gently lit my path
And softened all things stark.
The July birth, the July death of
my happy summer child
Marked a life too brief that ended
Without rancor, without guile.
Like the fireworks that leave images
On unprotected eyes...
Her lustrous life engraved my heart...
With love that never dies.

~ Sally Migliaccio
TCF Babylon, Long Island, NY

You Don't Just Lose Someone Once

— author unknown

You don't just lose someone once.
You lose them when you close your eyes at night.
And as you open them each morning.
You lose them throughout the day.
An unused coffee cup.
An empty chair.
A pair of boots no longer there.
You lose them as the sun sets.
And darkness closes in.
You lose them as you wonder why.
Staring at a starlit sky.
You lose them on the big days.
Anniversaries.
Birthdays.
Graduations.
Holidays.
Weddings.
And the regular days, too.
You lose them in a song they used to sing.
The scent of their cologne.
A slice of their favorite pie.
You lose them in conversations you will never have.
And all the words unsaid.
You lose them in all the places they've been.
And all the places they longed to go.
You lose them in what could have been.
And all the dreams you shared.
You lose them as the seasons change.
The snow blows.
The flowers blossom.
The grass grows.
The leaves fall.

You lose them again and again.
Day after day.
Month after month.
Year after year.
You lose them as you pick up the broken pieces.
And begin your life anew.
You lose them when you realize.
This is your new reality.
They are never coming back.
No matter how much
You miss them or
Need them.
No matter how hard you pray.
They are gone.
And you must go on.
Alone.
Time marches on, carrying them further and further
away.
You lose them as your hair whitens and your body
bends with age.
Your memory fades.
And the details begin to blur.
Their face stares back at you from a faded photograph.
Someone you used to know.
You think you might have loved them once.
A long time ago.
Back then.
When you were whole.
You don't just lose someone once.
You lose them every day.
Over and over again.
For the rest of your life.

Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday.
It'd been a while, you see.
And there, without a warning,
the pain washed over me.
I drove the old way yesterday
and sadness came on strong,
taken back by so much feeling,
since you've been gone so long.
Places seem to lie in wait
to summon up the tears,
to say remember yesterday,
those days when you were here.
Places where you laughed and played
are places where I cry.
These places hold the memories
that will live as long as I.

~ Genesse Gentry
TCF Marin County, CA
In Memory of Lori Gentry

I cannot touch the ones I love in
the way I once did, but we touch
differently now. I wish I could
hold them and I will always miss
their physical presence.
But I am not separate from them.
I am not separate from our
ongoing love.

Benjamin Allen

TheAfterloss.com

Grief Reactions vs Grief Responses

By Litsa Williams, MA, LCSW-C
Program Director and Co-Founder of *What's Your Grief?*
[www.http://whatsyourgrief.com](http://whatsyourgrief.com)

Though these words are often used synonymously in everyday speech, in mental health there is an important distinction between reactions and responses that can be helpful to understand in grief. I can remember learning this distinction in my grad school training, not in the context of grief, but in the context of anger and addiction. It was only years later that I read Thomas Attig's description of grief reactions and grief responses in his book *How We Grieve*. I realized I'd been talking to my clients (and myself) about this distinction for years. I just hadn't thought of it in the simple terms of reaction and response that I'd learned years before.

Grief Reactions

When something happens to us, reactions are what happens in us as a result, almost instantly and often unconsciously. In grief, they are the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that feel almost instinctive, uncontrollable, and sometimes totally crushing. They are normal and natural and expected, even though they can make us feel overwhelmed and out of control.

Grief Responses

In mental health, a response is a more conscious, deliberate, and measured process that comes *after* a reaction. They ideally come from a place of curiosity, after observing our reactions and considering how they are helping or harming us. Our response may be to continue to affirm our initial reaction or to change course in a way that is more consistent with our values or more helpful to our mental well-being.

Let's Break This Down With Some Examples

Example 1:

My grief reaction is to avoid certain people, places, or things that remind me of my loss because it is too emotional.

My response is to push myself out of my comfort zone and go somewhere hard (while taking care of myself) so I don't lose the good things that come with those people, places, and memories.

Example 2:

My grief reaction might be to blame myself for the death and to fixate, self-punish, and ruminate about that.

My grief response might be to see that my reaction is harming me, so I start to work on self-compassion, self-forgiveness and stopping myself when I start down the rumination hole.

Example 3:

My grief reaction might be to continue to stay connected to my loved one and their memory.

My grief response might examine and question that reaction, based on societal expectations that I 'move on' or stop talking about the loss. But ultimately (hopefully) my response is to affirm my reaction, knowing continuing bonds is often healthy and helpful!

Example 4:

My grief reaction might be to immediately cut off all friends who said insensitive or hurtful things in my grief.

My grief response might be to take a deep breath and then give them feedback. Knowing social support is important, I might decide to explain some things about grief. I then decide to tell them what I need from them in the future to see if, with that feedback, they can.

No Self-Judgement Here

Just so we're very clear, grief reactions are just that - reactions. They aren't good or bad or right or wrong. These are just the natural things that come up for you immediately in grief.

They will be helpful sometimes, which is great. But they will be harmful other times, and that's okay. Because that's what responses are for! They're so that you can examine your reactions, decide how they're serving you, and figure out how to proceed.

Okay, But Isn't It Hard to Tell Sometimes?

Yes, absolutely.

In moments of deep, acute pain, when overcome by grief reactions, it's hard to step outside to assess it. It takes effort and practice and even then it doesn't always come easily. It can be helpful to start just by noticing your reactions as they come up. Simply describe them to yourself. If your loved one's favorite song comes on, do you rush by it or do you leave it on? If you get home from work and feel the pang of loneliness opening the door to an empty house, what do you do at that moment? When you get a notice in the mail from your local hospice about an upcoming support group, do you throw it in the trash, not wanting a reminder of the hospice? Sign up right away to go to the group? Put it on the fridge to think about it?

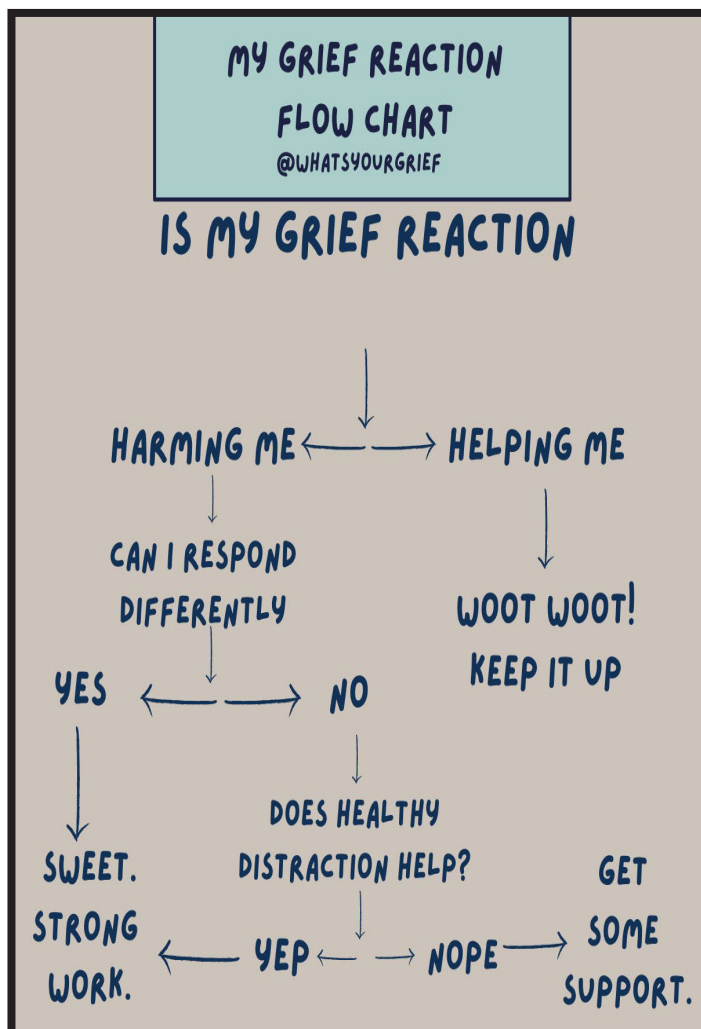
Remember, this isn't about right or wrong – it is just about noticing and describing your own reactions.

Now what?

Once you've become more practiced in noticing your immediate reactions you can begin to practice assessing them. A simple question like, "is this working for me?" or "is this helping me or harming me?" can go a long way. Even if you're not sure, it is a good reminder that just because a reaction is natural, that doesn't mean it is serving us!

Once you've settled on an answer, you can make conscious and deliberate decisions about your grief responses. To be clear, just because you recognize a grief reaction is harming you doesn't mean you'll be able to easily change your response. Avoidance can be very hard to shake. Anger, guilt, blame, and self-blame reactions can take a lot of time and effort to change. So once you get past the assessment piece, you might find yourself needing to get some support with your responses.

Don't you worry, we've made a handy dandy little flow chart to help you imagine what this might look like.



Source: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-reactions-vs-grief-responses/>

The Sign

As a little boy Jody loved to pick Black-eyed Susans. He'd pick those wild flowers and bring them to me with such love and pride in presentation. The last bunch he picked for me was on my birthday before his death, August 4, 1976.

The Black-eyed Susan is an independent wild flower that cannot be forced to grow out of season. The growing period for these wild flowers is the middle of June to the middle of August. But there, the first of September in the year of my son's death, in the center of Jody's grave, was a single perfectly formed Black-eyed Susan. It stood with strength and reassurance. It was all alone in the still, unsettled dirt covering the grave. There was not even a blade of grass or a single weed around.



I wept with mixed emotions of intense loss and love, feeling both distance and closeness, sadness and sudden relief. I saw it as a sign from my darling Jody. It spoke to me words from my dead child. "Do not cry. Do not despair. I love you and never intended for you to suffer so much. Please forgive me, and please be happy with the rest of your life. Please believe that I'm okay and at peace."

Whether it was a sign from Jody or from God, perhaps a bird dropped a Black-eyed Susan seed on the fresh grave, it brought me relief. I felt that my son wasn't so far away, and that his spirit would always be with me.

If nothing more, it helped me to begin to think of Jody there at the gravesite. He was dead, and I began to accept that. I started to realize that I would never again see his form as I had known it. But his spirit would be close and would guide me. I would not forget him and what we shared. He would always be special. What we gave to one another, what we had meant to each other, would not die or diminish with the passage of years, and it has not.

Each year since Jody's death, a single Black-eyed Susan has grown on his grave. It is a comfort and a joy. It is a remarkable phenomenon that now makes me smile rather than cry. Joey was a kid who never forgot my birthday, and never outgrew giving his mom flowers. I choose to believe he still hasn't. There are many mysteries in life and death that can't be explained, and I think shouldn't be, just accepted.

~ Susan White-Bowden
In memory of Jody
"From a Healing Heart"

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.