



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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NEWSLETTER - Volume 3, Issue No. 4
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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

July ~ August 2018
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629
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JULY MEETING

Monday, July 23, 2018

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church

St. Vincent's Center

3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Please Note Location Change!!

Grief and Your Health - When you are grieving your physical, emotional and psychological self is under a great deal of stress. It is especially important that you be mindful of your health as this is also a time when your immune system can be compromised. At this meeting we will talk about some health-related issues that can occur during your grief journey, ways to help keep yourself in good health while you grieve, and strategies for relieving stress and tension. Plan to share any activities that have helped you to deal with stress and ask questions about the health-grief connection. **Please Note: Because the MPH Parish Center will be closed for maintenance during our July meeting time, we will be meeting in the St. Vincent Center south of the Parish Center and School building. Follow the signs to the entrance on the north side of the building. We will be meeting downstairs in the basement area.**

AUGUST MEETING

Monday, August 27, 2018

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church

3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

What's in a Name? - This meeting will offer each of us an opportunity to talk about our child, grandchild or siblings' name. Why was that name chosen? Does it have any particular connection with your family heritage? Were they named after a family member? Did they have a nickname? How do you feel their name may have reflected their personality? Do you have a special story about their name--how it came to be chosen, how they liked or didn't like the choice, etc. Please plan to share and enjoy the opportunity to say your loved one's name.

Meetings are always held on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted. Listen to radio & TV for cancellations due to severe weather conditions.

This newsletter is sponsored by:

*Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter
Teresa Jenkins Carson who died on June 17th*

*Mary J. Lindeen in loving memory of her grandson
Drew Lindeen who died in July.*

*The Locke Family in loving memory of our son and brother,
Christen Locke, who gained his heavenly wings on July 5th*



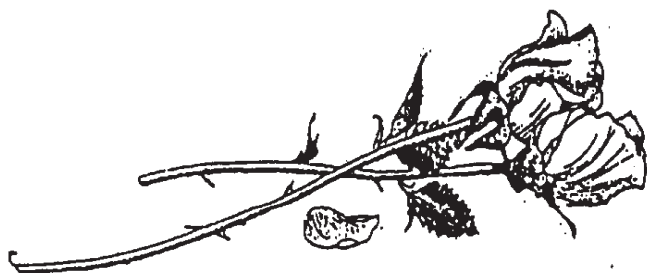
*Penny Lumpkin in loving memory of her son William
Henry (Hank) Lumpkin who died on August 19th*

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

*Mark and Linda Marling in loving memory of their granddaughter Morgan
Marie Pollak who was born on August 14th and died on August 27th*

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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MARK YOUR CALENDAR !

25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release
Saturday, September 29, 2018
Shelterhouse #3 on Memory Lane
Lake Shawnee, Topeka, KS
Further info and RSVP Form inside this newsletter

We Need Not Walk Alone

From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

Summer has turned rather hot and miserable here in Kansas. With occasional respites of welcoming rain and a day or two of much appreciated coolness, we move forward into July and August. I hope many of you have made the decision to attend the National Compassionate Friends Conference in St. Louis July 27-29. There will be 105 workshops covering many aspects of grief including cause of death, coping skills while grieving, handling holidays and other special days, grieving style differences in men and women and so much more. There are also 37 Sharing Sessions planned offering you the opportunity to share your grief experiences with others and hopefully learn a few strategies for handling your journey. The Conference will also include a beautiful Candle Lighting Memorial Program and a Walk to Remember.

If you cannot attend the conference, you can still have your child, grandchild or sibling represented there. You can submit their name to be carried in the Walk to Remember. You can sponsor a centerpiece for either the Friday luncheon or Saturday evening dinner in their memory. You can sponsor a Workshop or a Sharing Session in your loved one's memory. You can also order a special memorial ornament featuring your loved one's photo. Information about these options can be found on the National TCF website (www.compassionatefriends.org).

25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release: The Topeka Chapter will be celebrating our 25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release on September 29th from 11:30 - 3:00 at Shelter House #3 on Memory Pointe at Lake Shawnee. We are so pleased this year to have singer/songwriter Alan Pedersen join us to present a program of his music. Many of you will be familiar with Alan's songs that we have used at our Candle Lighting and at past picnic events. Some of the titles you might recall include: "Tonight I hold This Candle", "The Elephant in the Room" and "Celebrate the Children". Alan has been traveling across the U.S. in his "Angels Across the USA Tour", speaking and playing his music for TCF Chapters and other bereavement groups. His beautiful blue van is covered with butterfly stickers with the names of children being remembered on the tour. You can check this out and even sponsor a butterfly in your loved ones' name by visiting Alan's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/angelsacrosstheusa/>

We hope you will mark your calendar for Saturday, September 29, 2018 and plan to attend this very special event. Look for the yellow RSVP Form in this issue of the newsletter and also on our Chapter's website under Special Events at www.tcfotopeka.org. The Form also offers you the opportunity to Sponsor a Dove in memory of your loved one. This may be the last year we have this particular event, so we encourage you to plan to attend as we honor the lives of all those children, grandchildren and siblings who "left too soon".

Meetings/Online Resources: We invite you to join us at a monthly support group meeting. We always have interesting topics related to grief to talk about, provide an opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings in a safe, non judgemental setting, and a chance to talk about your child, grandchild or sibling. This group offers support and hope and we welcome you to join us. There is never any obligation to speak or participate in the discussion if you don't care to do so; but much can be learned by listening to others who are walking this path. We also welcome suggestions on meeting topics you would like to see us explore. For those who cannot attend a regular meeting, we would encourage you to check out the TCF Private Facebook Pages or Online Communities on the National TCF website posted above. These Pages cover all different kinds of loss/circumstances of death, etc. Since these are "closed" Facebook pages/Online Communities, you must register and be approved to participate by the page moderator and TCF. This process insures respect for your privacy and encourages open and honest discussion.

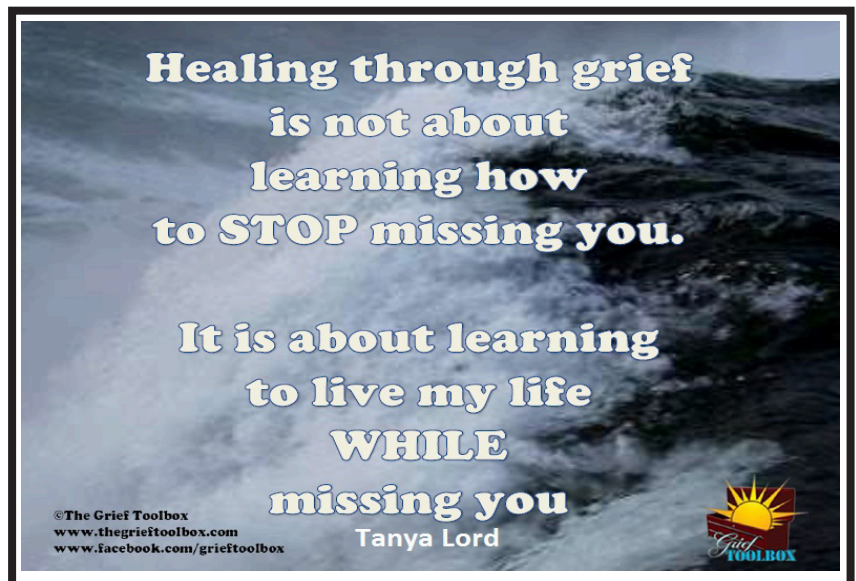
Until next time, be gentle with yourself and let the healing happen. Remember, You Need Not Walk Alone

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom

Grief Camp for Kids

Grief Camp is a fun and safe place for children to discover their capacity to heal, grow and lead more fulfilling lives. We share memories, express feelings, try new activities, sing, eat s'mores, build campfires and make friends! We are now accepting applications. (\$75.00 per person (scholarships available). To inquire about the availability of scholarships, make a donation to support a child or for more information, please contact Suz McGiver at 785-430-2152 or smciver@midlandcc.org Age range for this Camp is 6 to 12/13 year-olds. The Camp is put on by the Center for Hope and Healing through Midland Care of Topeka.

September 28-30, 2018 (Friday-Sunday)
Arrival Time on Friday - 6:00 pm
Pick-up Time on Sunday - 11:00 a.m.



**Healing through grief
is not about
learning how
to STOP missing you.**

**It is about learning
to live my life
WHILE
missing you**

Tanya Lord

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www.thegrieftoolbox.com
www.facebook.com/grieftoolbox

**Grief
TOOLBOX**

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 7th and died on June 17th*

♥ *Mary Harrington & John Jones in loving memory of Juliet Faith Harrington who was born on September 2nd and died on August 25th; and Clara Harrington-Jones who was born and died on August 26th*

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

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

Compassionate Friends web address:
www.compassionatefriends.org

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

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

We Encourage You to Submit a Memory Page - We are once again accepting Memory Pages for the newsletter. However, while they will not be published in the printed edition of the newsletter, they will appear in the online PDF version of the newsletter which is posted and viewable on our TCF Chapter website at www.tcftopeka.org < This option helps to not only save printing costs, but will also allow us to include Memory Page photos in full color rather than in black and white. If you have questions, contact Susan at chanx2@cox.net

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Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER - Have you signed up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more participants we have, the more income we can generate. I encourage you to go to www.dillions.com/community-rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity you wish to support. The Topeka Compassionate Friends Chapter NPO number is 65403. Once you have done so and have a Dillions Shopper's Card, every time you make a purchase at Dillions a portion of your total will be donated to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program **costs you nothing and does not affect your fuel points** for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select Option 3.
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Our Thanks to: Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite the printing cost of this newsletter.

Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

Saturday, September 29, 2018 - 25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release. Shelterhouse #3 at Lake Shawnee.
Special guest speaker/musical performer Alan Pedersen.
Watch for more info in this month's newsletter and on the Topeka Chapter website at www.tcftopeka.org

Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:

2018 ~ St. Louis MO - 41st National July 27-29, 2018
2019 ~ Philadelphia, PA
2020 ~ Atlanta, GA
2021 ~ Detroit, MI
2022 ~ Houston, TX

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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 each event. This is a directive from the National TCF Office to protect all TCF members. **Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing list will be included in the We Remember section***

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

Jon Bieher, brother of Andrea Smith, who was born on August 5th

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, who was born on September 17th

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

Carly Kathleen Cornelis, daughter of Cami Green, who died on September 15th

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, who died on August 9th

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

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

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



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

Juliet Faith Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, who was born on September 2nd; and who died on August 25th

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

Spencer Mark Hastings, son of Steve and Sue Hastings, who died on September 28th

Vernon A. Jamison, Sr., son of Eugene A. and Mayverdis Jamison who was born on August 30th

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

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, who was born on September 14th

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

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

Sharis Thompson Meyer, daughter of Gary and Margaret Thompson, who was born on September 15th; died on August 25th

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

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

Kasey Pike, grandson of Grace Reichle, who died on August 7th

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

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, who was born on September 10th

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

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

This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for August and September

The Solitude of Grief

There are wounds one can't assuage
For the cut is deep and bleeding
Some wounds show no outward trace
For it's the heart that sore and needing
How does one cope with a broken heart
A heart that's cold and lonely
From where the strength to carry on
From a grief that's shared...but yours only
Still in dreams we see them yet
So young, so fair, so alive
I don't know how we cope with death
But somehow----somehow we do survive
Always a part of this heart of mine
Now tossed like a windblown leaf
And I imprisoned in a world not mine
In the solitude of grief.

*~ Harvey Hockstein, TCF Morris Area, NJ
in memory of his daughter, Marilyn*

When trying to remember when something took place, our mind decides by remembering whether it was before or after our child died. It is a pivotal date that forever created a division in the timeline of our hearts and mind. When looking at photographs taken prior to our son's death, I see a look of true happiness untouched by the tragedy that was pending. In photos taken since, there is a smile on the outside but a touch of pain and loss can be seen in our eyes. The reality that tragedy can strike and we have no control is hiding behind the smile.

-Karen Cantrell-Frankfort, KY-TCF



Remembering

Friends may think we have forgotten
When at times they see us smile.
Little do they know the heartache
That our smile hides all the while.
Beautiful memories are wonderful.
They last 'til the longest day.
They never wear out.
They never get lost and can never be given away.
To some you may be forgotten,
To others you are a part of the past.
But to those who loved and lost you
Your memory will always last.

~ Author unknown

(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.)

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And We Remember - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in the We Remember section of this newsletter, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email the information to chanx2@cox.net< We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those parents requesting it. If you have previously submitted your child's information and it has appeared in the newsletter during the past year, you **do not** need to resubmit it. If you have just begun receiving this newsletter, or have never submitted this information, you will need to do so in order for it to be included. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____ Son__ Daughter__ Grandchild__ Brother__ Sister__

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Father _____ Mother _____

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

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

A Special and Important Message to Our New Compassionate Friends

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

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

---Topeka TCF Chapter Steering Committee

Additional Support Group Resources

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

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Pozez Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email lrosen@stormontvail.org. For information call (785) 354-5225.

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

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.

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



Find us on:
facebook®

TCF National Page (open group)

<https://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA/>

Los Amigos Compasivos/USA

<https://www.facebook.com/LACUSA/>

TCF Private Facebook Groups

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>

Loss of a Child

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/407123299460580/>

Sounds of the Siblings (bereaved siblings only)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/>

Loss of a Grandchild

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759177998317/>

Sign up for Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

TCF National Magazine

***We Need Not Walk Alone* Available Free Online**

The Compassionate Friends national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone®*, is available for free online. The magazine remains available in print free with any patron donation or when ordered by paid subscription through TCF's online store.

We Need Not Walk Alone provides comfort and support to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents through stories, poems, advice columns, and much more. It has been referred to as "a support group in print" and is published three times a year.

Sign-up for a free online subscription through our website, compassionatefriends.org. It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use.

If ONLY They Knew

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid, I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For twenty-six years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If they only knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him, I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If they only knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, I do not cry in self-pity for what I have lost. I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, and for all he still longed to hear. For the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death, if only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken that "time heals, that you'll get over it, that it was for the best, that God takes only the best," and realize that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we are prepared to try to stand in the shoes of others. We will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

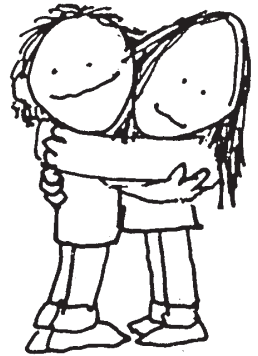
~ Jan McNess, TCF, Victoria, Australia



Siblings Corner

When Siblings Are Grieving

The sibling group of the Acadiana Chapter, Lafayette, LA, has prepared a list of concerns with which siblings who are grieving must cope. These issues and suggestions are relevant not only for parents, but for other family members, friends and teachers as well.



1. **Don't overprotect us.** We are trying to fit back into our lives, and overprotecting us makes it harder.

2. **Many feel that being stoical is being strong.** Don't hide your grief from us. Show us that you grieve too, so we will come to you when we are hurting.

3. **Information is important.** We want to know what has happened or is happening, but we are often afraid to ask for fear of hurting you more than you already hurt. Please give us the opportunity to ask questions, and please answer our questions truthfully.

4. **We often feel we are being ignored.** Especially when we are left with other people and when these people won't talk to us about what is going on. Parents and family members can help us when they help others to be open with us.

5. **Grief is an individual experience.** Sometimes when we are hurting badly, we need to be left alone. Please honor that need.

6. **Grief is not a placid experience; it is full of ups and downs.** Sometimes we are happy when you are sad, and sometimes we're sad when you are happy. Help us to accept that this is all right.

7. **Advice and easy answers to difficult philosophical questions don't help.** Don't tell us something just to be saying something. It's all right to tell us that you don't have all the answers.

8. **Don't tell us that we won't understand when we ask questions.** We understand more than you think we do.

*~ The Sibling Group
TCF - Acadiana Chapter, LA*

Choosing Life

"It will never be the same. Never."

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

~ Marcia F. Alig

TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

Inner Tempest Stilled

Sometimes I sense a little flutter. Like a shadow swiftly slipping by. Or I hear a silent, gentle murmur. Like a soft whisper from the sky.

Sometimes, I hear you call my name, or clearly see your face before me. And I feel that you are with me still. Then peacefully ... I come to know

As I am thinking happy thoughts of you, You, my son, are thinking of me too. Loving memories fill my aching heart. As dreaming dreams of what could be ...

Or might have been, if you were here. Until the piercing pain of losing you comes tumbling down on trembling fear.

And clearly once again I hear you say,

"But Mom ...

What if I had never been? You could not then, in Love, remember me."

~ By Beenie Legato Clendive, Montana

Lost Potential....

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a grief specialist named Dr. Cable. He said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent, one thing stuck in my mind.

He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing up in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

~ Chris Anderson

The Children's Cemetery

Here where their silent voices speak to us
where wind and cloud and stone bear their names.
Here where their laughter touches our tears,
and where their image conquers space or time.

Where memories tremble between love and pain,
and where their glory kindles our lives.

Here where their beauty reaches out to us
and where their kindness warms a tired world

Here let us stand and look unto their graves
to find their faces gentle in the sky.

Let us remember how their presence was
a treasure and a wealth beyond account.

Here let us weep.

Here let us love.

Here let us thank them

for the joy they gave

to our living and to our hope.



~ Sacha Wagner

One day you wake up and realize you must have survived it because you are still here, alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there. Your own awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow. One day...one glorious day, you wake up and feel your skin tingle again and you forget just for an instant that your heart is broken...and it is a beginning.

~ Susan Borrowman
Kingston, Canada TCF

This I Can Share With You

I have not experienced the death of my only child,
But some of us have.

I have not experienced a child dying by suicide,
But some of us have.

I have not watched my child try to fight a terminal illness,
But some of us have.

None of us would dare say, "I know just how you feel."

Even if our experiences are similar,

No two situations are exactly alike.

But I can say,

I remember the pain when my child died.

I remember the feelings of insanity.

I remember the feelings of aloneness.

I remember wishing I could die.

I remember wanting to share something with my child,
But he wasn't there.

So my friend, our experienced have parts in common
And parts that are different.

So why should we listen to each other?

Do we have anything to share?

Do you know what heartbreak feels like?

All of us do.

Do you know the numbness of grief?

All of us do.

Do you know what it's like to have empty arms?

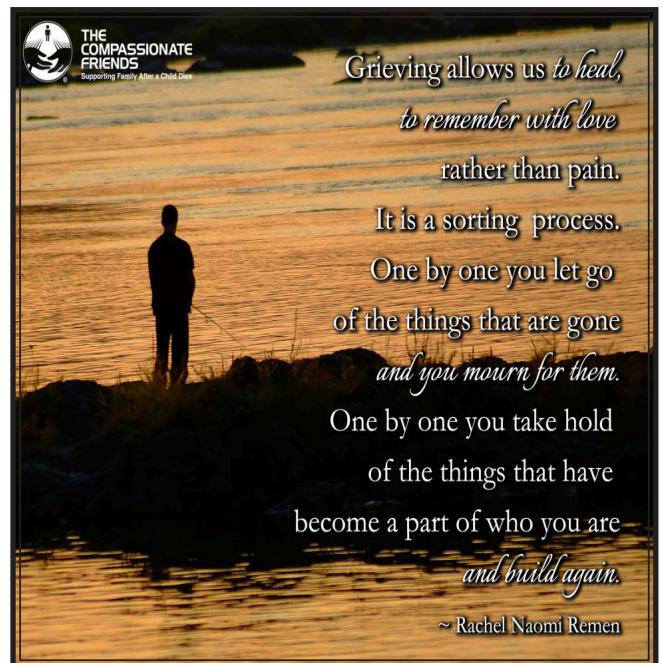
All of us do.

So let's learn what we can of our commonalities.

We loved a child, but our child left too soon.

This we can share with you.

~Marilyn Willett Heavilin, author of
Roses in December



~ Rachel Naomi Remen

Ten Tricks Your Brain Plays on You During Grief

*By Bob Baugher, PhD
Des Moines, WA*

Your brain-what an amazing organ. It can outthink the most complex computer. It is-well-it's who you are. Your brain-or you-is reading these words and taking in information in microseconds. So, with all its wondrous abilities, why would your brain trick you, especially at a time when you need it most? Because it's not perfect. However, don't let your brain (or you) take it personally. Just keep reading and you'll begin to recognize how these brain imperfections can influence you during the most difficult time of your life.

Trick #1: I will feel this way forever.

When the death occurred, you absolutely believed that you would never laugh again; but you did. Do you remember that first time? Were you surprised when you heard laughter and realized that it was coming from you? After you recovered from the shock, you may have chastised yourself for "forgetting" your loved one. As time has gone by, however, you have hopefully begun to realize that your loved one would want laughter to return.

Trick #2: Guilt

Perhaps the cruelest trick your brain plays on you is one where the past continues to be rewritten. Just look at all the ways that guilt can complicate your grief. See if any of these sound familiar:

If-Only Guilt-After the death you find yourself revisiting events in the life of your loved one in which you say, "If only...." Or "I should have....." or "Why didn't I?"

Role Guilt-"I wasn't a good enough _____ to this person." We're still waiting for the perfect (choose one) parent/spouse/sibling/grandparent/child.

Death Causation Guilt-The death occurred because of something I did or failed to do. It matters little whether I actually had anything to do with the death. I still feel guilty.

Trick #3: I'm not like those people who use clichés.

If you're like most bereaved people you've heard so-called words of wisdom and comfort from those folks who think they are somehow helping: Everything happens for a reason, I know just how you feel, and It's time to move on. No doubt these feeble attempts at soothing your pain have caused you some degree of frustration as you say to yourself, "What is wrong with these people? Don't they get it?" However, your brain has deceived you again. Why? Because weren't these some of the same statements you offered to others in grief

before you knew better? How quickly our brain "forgets" that we, too, used to be a member of the insensitive crowd.

Trick #4: I need to grieve just right.

This trick is often played on those of us who have issues with perfectionism. The death you've experienced is like no other. Therefore the grief reactions you've been experiencing have thrust you into a world that is foreign to you-into a confusing array of emotions and thoughts swirling around in your brain. As these reactions continue, another part of your brain is asking, "What's wrong with me? Why am I so _____?" Following the death of a loved one you'll never hear someone say, "You know, I'm grieving just right." Instead you hear, "I'm not crying enough." Or "I'm crying too much." Or "I should be more angry." Why these reactions? It's just your struggling brain doing the best it can.

Trick #5: The second year will somehow be easier.

Another trick your brain will play on you is that it will convince you that nothing can be worse than going through each day of the first year-the first birthday, the first holiday, the first mothers day or fathers day, the first Thanksgiving, the first anniversary. All these firsts without our loved one add up to a great deal of pain. For many of us, once the first year is over, our brain conjures yet another deceptive scheme by offering convincing guidance, "Whew! I've made it through one whole year. As difficult as it was, I made it through each day. Year two should be better." Better? Well, maybe for some people. But if you are like many people you discovered that your brain lied. You found that, in some ways the second year was more difficult. Why? Because much of the first-year shock had worn off and now the pain is raw.

Trick #6: My grief is worse than anyone else's.

At first, as you came across other people who had a loss different from yours it may have been easy for your brain to come up with the belief that went something like this: "Yes, these people are also in pain. But their loss is not like mine. Their pain cannot be as intense, as deep, and long lasting as mine." When you began to meet people who had a similar loss, your brain may have concluded, "Their loss is terrible, but they must not have loved their person as much as I love mine." Later, as you look back, you may have realized that the pain you were going through made it difficult to really feel the depth of grief and despair experienced by others as they coped with their own loss. You now realize that, while you can never measure the amount of another's pain, you have come to understand that, in our humanness, we are all

united by our grief because it demonstrates that we all have loved.

Trick #7: Grief feels like going crazy.

Because the death of a precious loved one is so foreign to any experience we've ever had, our poor brain suddenly finds itself in a world of chaos. The coping techniques we've used with past negative events just don't work as well when it comes to grief. Therefore, our brain can only come to one conclusion: You are going crazy. It certainly feels that way. However, if you were really going crazy, you wouldn't have had a funeral, you wouldn't cry, you wouldn't have memory problems or feel anger or guilt. You would go through each day behaving as if the death never occurred. Instead you absolutely feel that you are going crazy because you do experience all these things in ways you've never experienced before. A mother whose 20 year-old son died in an auto accident explained her grief to me by saying: "Grief is unfinished love." Yes, you feel like you're going crazy because you have loved and will continue to love until you die.

Trick #8: Relatives who haven't spoken to one another will put aside their differences because of this death

When the death hit you and your family, your brain might have concluded, "The tragedy and finality of this death in our family will surely bring people together. Family members will awaken to the fact that life is too short to hold grudges, to persist in silent indifference to the feelings of others, and to withhold forgiveness." However, you have sadly realized again that your brain was wrong.

Trick #9: I will get a little better each day.

In the past, when other negative events occurred in your life, you may have found that, day after day, things did get a little better. In the case of grief, you almost cannot blame your brain for coming up with a similar belief. However, you may have discovered that day 90 following the death was worse than day 30 and that you may have felt worse at the ten month point than you did at the five month point. Why is this? One reason is shock, which is your brain's way of cushioning the intensity of the blow. Whether death is sudden or expected, our brain goes into shock for a period of time. The length is different for everyone. As you know, when shock begins to wear off, the pain begins to set in. This is one of the major reasons that, when people look back on the weeks and months following a death, they report that it was like they were in a fog, like they were going through the motions much like a robot. People use terms like, "I was on automatic pilot." Or "I was a zombie." Shock is your brain trying to protect itself (you) from the full impact of the pain.

Trick #10: Letting go of my grief means letting go of my loved one.

This brain maneuver is one of the biggest challenges in coping with grief. If you could actually hear your brain speaking to you, the words would sound something like this: "Now that some time has gone by I can feel that the intensity of my loss easing up just a little. But wait! I can't let this happen because if the pain begins to leave, the memories of my loved one will slip away as well. So, I must hold on to my sorrow, heartache, and anguish in order to preserve the connection with this person." This brain tactic is related to a type of guilt called, Moving On Guilt in which guilt feelings surface at the moment the bereaved person begins to feel a little better. As you know, an important part of your grief work is to hold on to the memories while simultaneously letting the pain of the loss gradually subside.

So, there they are: ten tricks of the brain that complicate the bereavement process. Some you knew already and found yourself nodding your head. A couple of them may have been new to you as you have come to realize that the death of your loved one has challenged your brain in ways it has never experienced before. In considering these tricks, you will now hopefully be a little kinder to your brain as it continues to cope with loss of someone you love.

(About the Author: Bob Baugher is a Psychology Instructor at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington, where he teaches courses in Suicide Intervention, Death & Life, Psychology of Human Relations, Understanding AIDS, and Abnormal Psychology. Bob has given more than 500 workshops on grief and loss. He is a frequent presenter at TCF Conferences, and will be presenting at the 2018 TCF National Conference in St. Louis, MO July 27-29.)



The Compassionate Friends

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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