



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. 2
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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

March ~ April 2018
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629
(785) 272-4895

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 26, 2018
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Know Me, Know My Child - This meeting offers each of us an opportunity to share something about our child, grandchild or sibling. Plan to bring a story, a poem, some music, a piece of clothing, a book, a photograph, or a toy--anything that you would like to share that relates to your loved one. In our group we understand the importance of remembering and being able to talk about our children in a loving and supportive atmosphere of acceptance and non-judgement. As we get to know each other, let's also get to know each child's story, their likes and dislikes, their favorite thing to eat, whatever you would like to share.

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 23, 2018
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Partners Sharing Session - During this program, members of the group split up in pairs. At a signal from the facilitator, one person in each group spends about 10 minutes telling their "partner" whatever they want about their child, the circumstances of the child's death, the feelings he or she is experiencing because of the death, or anything else the individual wishes to share. During this telling, the partner listens, but does not interrupt, express opinions, etc. At the end of 10 minutes, the partners switch off, with the second person having their 10 minutes of uninterrupted talk time. Following the second 10 minutes, both individuals have the opportunity to ask questions of each other, express thoughts and opinions about what each has said, etc.

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:

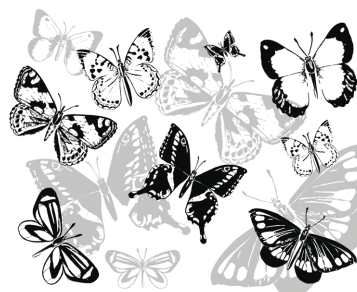
*Mark & Debi Harvey in loving memory of their
son Nathan Harvey who died on April 10th*

*Margaret & Tad Kramar & Benjamin Good in loving
memory of her son and his brother Spenser Thomas
Good who died on April 30th*

*Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her daughter
Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill who died on March 19th*

*Thomas & Debra Schuetz in loving memory of their
son Evan Michael Schuetz who died on April 12th*

*Terry & Kathy Watson in loving memory of their son Taylor William
Clay Watson who was born on April 12th and died on March 3rd*



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

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We Need Not Walk Alone



From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

Spring seems to be trying to make its way into Kansas although we continue to have periodic cold days and even some snow and ice. Due to the warm days, my tulip and daffodil bulbs are bravely trying to make their way to the surface of the garden. Sometime I think as grievers we also feel as though we have been encased in the cold winter grip of grief and even the hint of warmer weather - or some lessening in our pain -- can help us along on our journey. I hope the arrival of Spring in our area will bring you a renewed sense of hope and that some of the articles in this newsletter will offer you some comfort and encouragement.

Newsletter Mailing Update: Just a reminder that if you have not sent in the yellow newsletter renewal form from the Jan/Feb newsletter, you need to do so soon as we will be culling the newsletter mailing list of those who did not respond beginning with the May/June 2018 issue. The only exception is if your loss has occurred within the past 12 months, you will automatically remain on the newsletter for one full year unless you request your name be deleted. The renewal form also offers you the opportunity to have your child's information listed in the We Remember section of this newsletter and also gives you the opportunity to support the Topeka TCF Chapter by sending in a Love Gift or sponsoring a newsletter in your child, grandchild or sibling's memory. However, you are never required to send in donations in order to receive this newsletter, but since we are not allowed to charge any dues or fees, we do rely on donations to carry out our mission of hope and support for bereaved families.

National Conference Registration Update: We hope many of you will think about attending the 41st National Compassionate Friends Conference July 27-29, 2018 in St. Louis. This will be the closest national conference to us for several years and offers an opportunity to take advantage of more than 100 workshops on grief-related topics, hear guest speakers, participate in a Memorial Candle Lighting and a national Walk to Remember. Our Topeka Chapter will be assisting with the conference by sponsoring the Parents/Grandparents Hospitality area at the hotel. Registration for the conference and for the hotel should be available on the National TCF website by March 1st. Check it out at www.compassionatefriends.org Our Topeka Chapter will be hosting the Hospitality Area for conference delegates at the 2018 National Conference. If you would be interested in helping with this, please contact me at tcftopeka@gmail.com

TCF Facebook Groups: Please note the insert in this issue of the newsletter that listed the Private Facebook Groups sponsored on the National TCF website. For many of you who cannot attend in person meetings or are looking for additional support resources, these moderated pages may be just what you are looking for. As you can see from the listing, they cover all different kinds of loss/circumstances of death. Since these are "closed" Facebook pages, 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.

We Invite You to Our Meetings: We invite you to join us at a monthly support group meeting. We always have interesting topics related to grief to talk about, provide an opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings in a safe, non judgemental setting, and a chance to talk about your child, grandchild or sibling. There is really nothing quite like being in a room with people who truly do understand what this type of loss can mean and how it can affect our lives in so many different ways. This group offers support and hope and we welcome you to join us. There is never any obligation to speak or participate in the discussion if you don't care to do so; but much can be learned by listening to others who are walking this path. We also welcome suggestions on meeting topics you would like to see us explore.

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

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom

Finding Hope

Some find hope in butterflies, and some in children's smiles.
Some find hope in photographs, and some in walking miles.
Some find hope in quietness and solitary reflection.
Some find hope in helping others and sharing friendly affection.
Some find hope in holding tight to all the old traditions.
Some find hope in the creation of a special new variation.
Some find hope in family gathered, some in cherished friends.
Some find hope in seeking God, feeling peace in worship again.

Beyond the sad and beyond the past,
beyond the ache that lasts and lasts,
there is a path that winds its way
into your future and a hopeful day.

~ Karen Pope



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.

♥ *Mary Harrington & John Jones in loving memory of her children Jaime M. Harrington, stillborn February 3rd, and John Carl Harrington who was born December 15th and died March 18th*

♥ *Mark & Debi Harvey in loving memory of their son Nathan Harvey who died on April 30th*

♥ *Kathy & Danny Kaesewurm in loving memory of her brother, Terry Edward Burns who died on April 15th*

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

♥ *Debbie & Tom Schuetz in loving memory of their son Evan Michael Schuetz who died on April 12th*

♥ *Terry & Kathy Watson in loving memory of their son Taylor William Clay Watson who was born April 12th and died March 16th*

♥ *Todd & Kathleen Williams in loving memory of their son, Baby Boy Williams, who was stillborn on February 23rd*

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".

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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 your 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.

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

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

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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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

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

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

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

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



Carly Kathleen Cornelis, daughter of Cami Green, who was born on April 17th

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

Dan Evans, brother of Drew Evans, who died on May 21st

Claire Elise Fisher, daughter of Debra Fisher, born May 15th

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

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

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

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



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

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

(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 _____

I pray for the day that I can see you again
said the Mom

Close your eyes and you can see me
said herchild
I am always just a dream away...

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who died on May 7th
Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, who was born on May 8th

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Evan Michael Schuetz, son of Tom and Debbie Schuetz, who died on April 17th

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

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

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

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

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



This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for April and May.

Guilt and Regret

By Bill Sowers, Rachel's Dad

There are many things regarding Rachel's life and death that I regret: Walks not taken, a concert missed, a bad day at work that spilled into me yelling at her for no reason... Regrets. I can look back and feel a pang now and then or shed a tear, but I know that these are things that are forgiven. I have forgiven myself for my own humanness as her father.

Right after Rachel died I had a series of terrible "self-beatdowns" regarding issues such as the insecticide I used for years in the basement (which might have a link to the form of leukemia she had), the fact that I didn't see possible signs of leukemia before she was diagnosed, and some just plain silly things that I totally blew out of proportion. This was guilt. I had stood before the judge (myself) and jury (myself cloned 12 times), found myself guilty and thrown myself into a dark hole. This, for me, was guilt.

Guilt is an ugly, capped, steely cup that forever holds the misdeeds, real or perceived, that I have committed. This festering brew of misery within it has no means of escape.



It's only added to by new guilt that I pour into it.

Regret, to me, is like a battered old metal garden watering can. It takes the pain in

knowing that I have made mistakes... some terrible. It lets me hold these feelings for a while (to ponder them), but in the end Love (for my child and for myself) allows me to pour them out. Regret waters a garden of new possibilities within me. I can be a better person because I have learned from what I have done that was not right or good. Old regrets can resurface and pour back into the watering can but that's ok. Love is always there to tip the can over and pour those regrets back out.

I am guilty of many things I have said, done and thought in my life. But if my judge and jury is Love, the sentence will always be commuted to regret, not guilt. Just before she died Rachel told me as I was crying, "It's OK, Daddy. I know you tried your best." What greater or more powerful judge did I have than her.

(Bill Sowers and his wife Diana are members of the Topeka, KS TCF Chapter.)

REBUILDING YOUR LIFE – ONE PIECE AT A TIME



Death changes one's life in ways that cannot be anticipated. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed.

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following:

If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of putting the pieces back together is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect what was with what is and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands; it is the creation of a new picture of your life created one piece at a time.

~ Written by Stephanie Elson, *From Tears to Hope*

Memories

will bring you

love from the past,

courage in the present,

hope for the future.



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

- Sascha Wagner

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/>

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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.

In the Springtime of Your Grief

Spring has fragile beginnings; a tiny shoot of green that emerges from the cold earth, a hint of pastel against the brownish grass, a bud that awakens with the morning sun. Sometimes spring comes so quietly we almost miss it, but once it begins, it is impossible to ignore the daily growth and change. The morning sun brings sounds that were not there before. The breeze carries warmth that invites us to venture outside of ourselves. A promise is released with the budding and blossoming surrounding us. Hope emerges for the beginning of a new season, change is in the air.

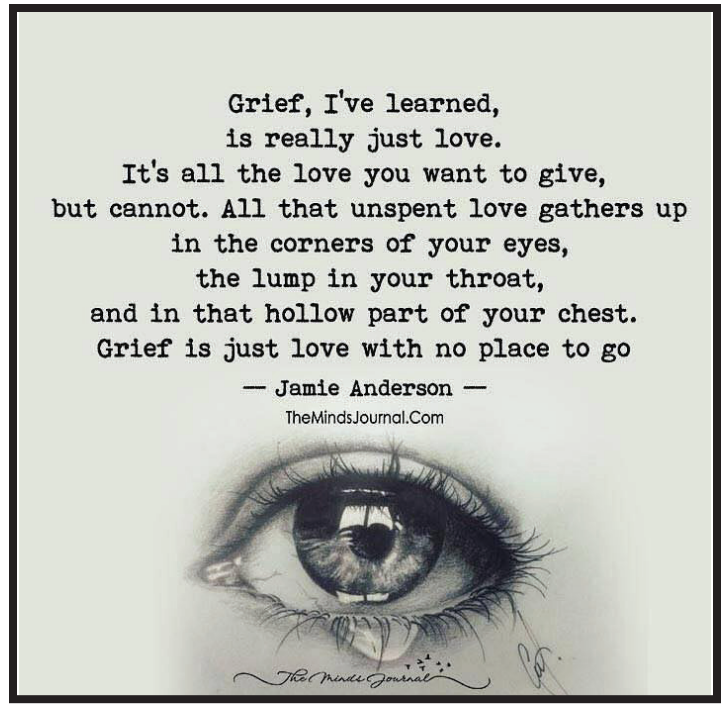
What we experience in the springtime of the year is what we can experience in the springtime of our grief. There begins to be a growing radiance. The radiance is not just around us; it is within us. A gradual warming of the heart silences the chill of intense pain. The natural unfolding of the grief process moves gently to remind us that we will survive. Life is changing and growth emerges through the changes. The song of our hearts that seemed off key begins to experience a harmonious blend of the past and the present. The songs of the birds invite us to join them in a celebration of a new life. In the springtime of our grief, there can be a new song for us to sing. It will be a song we composed through the heartache of loss.

Optimism for a better day may awaken us one morning. Hearing laughter and discovering it is coming from within ourselves gives us promise for today. Dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow shine brightly with the morning sun. Surviving the winter of our grief with the openness to embrace change is a decision to embrace loss and integrate its impact into the fabric of our lives. It can be a willingness to explore new possibilities that create a different landscape to behold. We can make a decision that we will begin to appreciate what we still have, not just focus on what is missing.



We will know when we have made that decision. Something buds; something opens. The harshness of winter is softened with new life and new growth. It is not something we can force; it is something that unfolds when the time is right. The springtime of grief arrives with no dramatic entrance, no flashing lights. The stillness of the beauty unfolds and captures our attention. It is happening around us, but it is also happening in us. If spring has already crossed your path of your personal journey of grief, rejoice! But, if the chill of winter remains in your heart, be encouraged; spring is on its way. Look for it; expect it and it will be yours to experience around you and in you!

~ Judi Fischer, Cleveland, OH



WHAT YOU ALLOW, LINGERS

*What you allow, lingers,
What you invite stays put,
So speak rudely to discord
And its sullen sisters,
Turn a cold shoulder to bigotry
In all its disguises,
Ignore the doorbell when evil rings,
And stop violence at the door -
Like a stranger.
Usher in joy like a long-lost friend -
Take its coat, its hat, entertain
Peace, chat up passion,
Pamper generosity,
Give the guest room to justice.
Sweep the porch
And place a welcome mat
For goodness,
Make your life poorly-suited
For anything but love.
And when hate knocks, act as if you have
moved!*

~ Annette Hope Billings, author of *A Netfull of Hope*

MY GRIEF MOSAIC

By Daina Mahon

I'm told the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey has stunningly beautiful mosaics. The amazing thing about these particular mosaics is that Muslim conquerors in 1453 plastered over them. The beauty of those works of art was deeply hidden for over five-hundred years. With the birth of the modern nation of Turkey, the Hagia Sophia became a museum, and the plaster was painstakingly removed. Among the many pieces of glass there were pieces of gold and silver, lapis lazuli, and many other precious metals. The main dome is resplendent again with light and beauty. Can you imagine these breathtakingly beautiful mosaics hidden for centuries behind plaster?

Reading about and looking at pictures of the Hagia Sophia got me to wondering if I have plastered over my pain and loss as I respond to a lack of sensitivity by friends and family who avoid talking about my child. It pains me very much to feel dismissed or ignored when I mention Devin. The discomfort of others adds another layer of cover to my pain. We who are grieving have a deep need for acknowledgement that our children lived, mattered and continue to be loved. As ignorance and the lack of compassion cover my heart, I realize I could become hard and brittle like plaster.

I prefer to see my grief as a mosaic. Each piece has its own unique dimension. My mosaic began with pieces of violet and black. The colors are almost violent in their rage and pain. These colors became merged with that of indigo purple, and magenta. To me, they represent intensity. Everything about my daughter's death occurred in intensity: sorrow, hurt, anger and inconsolability appeared. These pieces along with violet and black collided and enshrouded my grief design. These colorations were followed by blues: royal blue, midnight blue, ultramarine and peacock encroached on the ferocity of the beginning pieces. Acuteness was still dominant yet a sliver of acceptance emerged.

The next renderings were of dark greens. In our culture, green symbolizes hope and growth, while in some others it is associated with death, sickness, envy and the devil. These contradictions emerged in my grief mosaic. Hope finally arrived, but the incompatible concession that Devin was not coming back kept my color scheme somber.

Today emergent flashes of emerald, turquoise, maroon, fuchsia and a brilliant yellow (Devin's color) burst in. Is my grief mosaic complete? Will it ever be? Will I be whole and healed one day? In the words of Barbara

Jordan, "I live a day at a time. Each day I look for a kernel of excitement...don't ask me about tomorrow."

How is it with you? Have you begun to uncover the hard shell of plaster protecting the colors of your soul? Have you allowed the light in? May each of us have the courage to chip away at the hardness and allow beauty in our lives once more.

(About the author: Daina Simpson Mahon is an educator who worked as a private school principal for ten years, an English teacher and Outreach teacher to high school students for seven years, and a middle school language arts teacher for eight years. Teaching writing has been a passion of Daina's for many years, but her proudest accomplishment has been being Devin's mom. Devin was killed September 25, 2006, at the age of twenty-seven, as she rode her bicycle in Oxnard, California. Daina has written poetry and musings, and she has journaled as a way to express her grief. Devin was a writer, musician, actor, and lover of life.)

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Promises of Rainbows

I promise not to offer
Rainbows after storms
Or silver linings beyond the clouds,
But if you have tears of sorrow,
I will share them.
If you have words of anger,
I will hear them.
If you have moments of confusion
I will help you through them.
Perhaps
Your tears of sorrow today
Will water the seeds
Of tomorrow's garden
Of spiritual growth, of worthy priorities,
Of loving relationships and genuine
Understanding and compassion.
My sad friend, your weeping is not fruitless.

~Nancy Williams, TCF Marlboro, NJ



Spring Cleaning

By Darcie Sims

We used to live in a townhouse, one of those inventions designed to minimize housekeeping chores, mortgage payments and a tendency to accumulate more things than one needs to cross the Sahara in summer. We moved there because I liked the idea of no yard work, and we would be unburdened by conversations of "It's-Saturday-so-mow-the-lawn." I hate housework (it hates me too!), and we wanted a less complex life.

Smaller places do have a certain appeal...especially during the "It's Spring and that means let's-get-organized-around-here-and-throw-out-all-YOUR-stuff" mood that tends to permeate the months of March and April.

When you only have one closet, cleaning it takes a minimum of time. Opening the door starts the process, and if you are clever, you will stand with an open trash bag as you pry open the door. Always do this at 2:00 a.m. when the other nearby occupants in your townhome are asleep, or during those few quiet moments of solitude you get after announcing that Dairy Queen is having a twenty-minute-only-special, and you have (thoughtfully) placed the keys in the car.

Designed by some psychologist in an effort to help patients rid their psyches of old memories, useless information and general "clutter," spring cleaning has become an American phrase most often associated with grief. It is a painful process, this sifting and sorting of all the things that tell us (and the rest of the world) who we are or were.

There are as many ways to spring clean as there are homes and hearts and minds and spirits that need "adjusting" (a real psychological term thrown in just to remind you that I am a professional too!)

How many times have you been told "It's time to move on," or, "It's time to get back to normal," or, "You mean you haven't gotten rid of that yet?" (That can refer to a multitude of things such as his favorite pipe, her bathrobe that the dog attacked during one his "spells," or an odd assortment of baseball cards, used gum wrappers and dirty socks that were secreted under the bed, left behind for you to find and cry over.

How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to spring clean! How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to open that closet and sort through all those memories, trying to decide which ones to keep and which ones to pass on to the Salvation Army? How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to get back to living?

I am spring cleaning. I am sifting through the "stuff" that made up my loved one's life and I am learning to let go of a few things...slowly.

When we moved to a townhouse, we thought life wouldn't be so complicated. I wouldn't have to go out into the yard and remember how wonderful it was to enjoy the first spring flowers...with him. I don't want to cut the grass, because we loved playing in it, tickling our bare toes and laughing our way through spring into summer. We moved to a townhouse so we couldn't keep everything forever. It doesn't stay around anyway, so why have storage space? Why have cupboards that

no longer need to hold cereal that turns the milk blue, or closets that no longer need to hold baseball shoes, bats and crumpled homework pages? Why have room for memories?

WHY? Because, I can't live without them! Spring is a time for spring cleaning, for sifting and sorting and re-reading and remembering. Spring is a time for things to go and things to stay. We just have to decide which ones do what. Spring is a time for renewal, when the earth begins to defrost after a harsh and bitter winter. It doesn't matter when your loved one died ; it does matter when you begin to let spring back into your life. It does matter when you open that closet and let the memories come out, along with the hurts and the hopes that you buried one day not so very long ago.

You never know what you are going to find when you start spring cleaning. You might discover treasures you had long forgotten, or the tax papers you needed, or the Easter egg no one found last year. You might find a few bits of joy lurking under the bed (we found dust bunnies). What fun to remember how that stuff got there or who might have been hiding under the bed when you were looking for volunteers for trash patrol!

Spring cleaning is a tradition that follows the footprints across your freshly waxed floor. I wish there were still footprints to clean up, but since there aren't, I'll just have to spend a few extra moments with this box of treasures I found. No time like the present to inspect the "stuff" in search of few "bits of joy."

When we lived in a townhouse, we thought that maybe, in a few years, we could stretch out into something a bit larger (and have a maid, too!). Maybe we would just start a little patch of grass out front, plant a seed or two in a clay pot on the patio, and live with what we have. Eventually, my house got larger, and my heart has grown, too!

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(About the Author: Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS was a bereaved parent and child, a grief management specialist, a nationally certified thanatologist, a certified pastoral bereavement specialist, and a licensed psychotherapist and hypnotherapist. She is the author of Why Are the Casseroles Always Tuna?, Footsteps Through the Valley, Touchstones and If I Could Just See Hope. She co-authored A Place For Me: A Healing Journey for Grieving Kids, Footsteps Through Grief, The Other Side of Grief and Finding Your Way Through Grief with her daughter, Alicia Sims Franklin. She also wrote and produced the videos Handling the Holidays and What Color is Dead: Death From A Child's View as well as authored numerous chapters in professional books and textbooks. Darcie was featured in the award-winning video series "Good Grief" produced by Iowa Public Television and has been featured in several other videos as well. The world lost Darcie in February of 2014, but she will long be remembered for her compassion, generous spirit, her irrepressible humor, her work with bereaved families across the US and especially with The Compassionate Friends.)

"I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love."

~Leo Buscaglia

Secondary Losses

Secondary losses, exacerbate the pain
when our children die, leave us adrift,
struggling to stay sane.

Secondary losses --- the world as a safe place
where they would thrive, we'd watch them grow,
now fearful, desolate.

Secondary losses --- a friend (or friends) shut off,
can't look at death this closely
- the fear is tempest tossed.

Secondary losses --- the ability to cope
with anything and everything
in a world deprived of hope.

Secondary losses --- the good things that we held
have lost all their importance
when misery shrouds our cells.

Secondary losses --- our laughter, free from care.
The times we see its reason,
delightful, now so rare.

Secondary losses --- the ability to deny
that terrible things do happen
--invulnerability, a lie.

Secondary losses --- the self-confidence we knew,
our world view shattered,
can any part be true?

Secondary losses ---the lovely lives we had.
The sunshine that could fill our days,
when rarely we were sad.

Secondary losses may, transformed,
in time come back
But our children aren't returning
Nothing, no one, can change that.

~ Genesse Boudreau Gentry in
Stars in the Deepest Night.

Pop-Up Memories are Not Grief Bursts

By Nan Zastrow

Recently we experienced a pop-up memory of Chad. We (my husband and I) were driving home and stopped at the signal lights. A shiny beige pickup truck came whizzing through the intersection of the busy street and easily caught our attention. In the bed of the pickup truck was a 3' x 5' American flag whirling in the breeze. Simultaneously, Gary and I had an instant pop-up memory to a long ago time, when our son Chad, did the very same thing! I haven't seen such a display since Chad's death, and this pup-up brought kudos, a smile and a story to Gary and me.

If you are a web surfer, you are familiar with "pup=ups." In many situations, they are frustrating and distracting, but they do get your attention. Web pop-ups are those images that appear suddenly and unexpectedly in the middle of something else you were doing. Pop-ups in the Internet world can also lead you on a trail from site to site to discover a hidden piece of information. You are intrigued, and your senses become alert challenged by the clue.

As your grief begins to heal, you are likely to experience more pop-ups than grief bursts. I define grief pop-ups as a light-bulb kind of recognition that instantly recalls an event or moment in the life of your loved one that may have been forgotten or a "buried" memory. It doesn't require a specific trigger; it often just surfaces. It usually occurs when the mind is peaceful and is not focusing on any outside stimuli. The memory suddenly pop-up in your thoughts (whether stimuli or non-stimuli induced) and creates a highly pleasant sensation that brings a smile and a story associated with the recollection.

The story behind our pop-up memory on this particular day, was a high school senior, our son Chad. At the time, he was a member of the Wisconsin National Guard and passionately patriotic. His patriotic spirit was displayed every time he donned his army fatigues with the bloused pants over his tanker-style, infantry boots (not typical army issue). He was the young man who, with permission, drove an Army jeep to his homecoming celebration. He slept beneath a patriotic quilt. Camouflage was his preferred choice for casual dress. He joined the Army National Guard in his junior year of high school because he was motivated by Desert Storm. He lived and breathed his commitment. But the pop-up memory smile had to do with his 1976 Chevy truck. In the bed of his truck, he mounted a 3' x 5' American flag and proudly drove to school, work, the National Guards, and play with this symbol of

pride. Seeing some other young man with the same spirit of adventure on this day invoked an awesome pop-up memory from the past.

Differences between Pop-ups and Grief Bursts

The important element of pop-up memories are the stories. These differ from grief bursts. Most bereaved are familiar with the term grief bursts and can attest to having one. Grief bursts typically bring on a feeling of being overwhelmed with resident emotions of grief. They create a sensory jolt that typically comes from something that triggered the recollection. Grief bursts signal a single characteristic of a loved one that coincides with a familiar place, a smell, a song, a fragrance, or a glance of someone who looks like your loved one, just to name a few triggers. They may bring happy or sad memories. They create an opportunity for you to express your sorrow and re-acknowledge the reality of your loved one's death. In contrast, pop-ups, they seldom tie to a life-story or event to go along with the memory.

Pop-up memories can happen when you least expect them. Working in my kitchen one day, I had a pop-up memory of Chad and Jenny making pizza in a different house that we built. The pop-up memory recalled the story of the two of them camping on the shore of the Rib River and raiding the refrigerator and house for camping supplies. While writing this article, I had a pop-up memory of Chad returning home from advance military training sporting his proud tatoo. I easily recalled the story that went along with the conversation over the phone with Chad about making an appropriate choice for the tatoo.

The reality about pop-up memories is that every story recalled through pop-up memory revives our connection to our loved one. Pop-up memories always connect to a life story. You feel a need to retell the story or discuss it with someone else because the vision recalled is so captivating it begs repeating! You visualize your loved one in his/her time actively doing exactly what the pop-up memory awakened in your mind. It's every bereaved person's wish to be able to talk about the times in the life of their loved one that were special and pop-up memories provide that opportunity. These stories bring great comfort. What I like about pop-up memories is the warmth I feel years after the death. It allows me to re-live the happiness of who this person was and the special joys he brought to my life.

Embrace your pop-up memories

There will always be a place in your heart and your life for memories of your loved one. It's a comforting and

healing part of grief when the memory you experience can bring you moments of joy as you recall the story of what created the memory. Pop-ups can create instant connections to positive feelings like an instant replay at a sporting event. Details, sights, sounds, colors, and joyful emotions are vivid. You feel like you are right there again. Pop-ups interrupt the moment and connect the past to the present moment in your life. Merging the two confirms that our loved one lives forever in our hearts, our stories, and our memories. Love lives on!

The pop-up memory of Chad driving his truck with the billowing flag stayed with me for days. It encouraged me to look through a couple of photo albums again. Maybe it was a fluke that the summer's patriotic holidays were upon us. Or maybe it was just coincidental that we crossed paths at the intersection at the same time as these young men. What are the odds of that? Or maybe it was just one of those little miracles. Gary and I have recited almost every day in the past 20 years since Chad's death that remind us that Chad will always live in our hearts and will always be the wind beneath our wings!

(Note: Pop-up memories is not a clinical word or familiar word in the vocabulary of grief counseling. It was adopted by me as a result of this experience and its likeness to every day Internet surfing! Please feel free to use it as a means to describe healing grief stories! It is my wish that you too can recall the joy and pass it on! Nan)

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Breakthrough

By Nel de Keijzer

The tears of grief
Have washed away
The clouds of sorrow
And vision now is clarified

I miss you still,
But see you new
In light of joy
And smile at your remembrance.

The love we shared
Still here to give
And to experience
The joy that comes from that, IS YOU!

The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter, c/o Midland Hospice Care., Inc.
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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.