



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

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

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 28, 2018
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

I've Always Wanted to Ask That - At this meeting we invite those attending to ask questions about any aspect of their grief journey. As we travel along our grief journey, we may often wonder about the various feelings and/or experiences we are having. Do other people experience these same things? Why do I find some days so much harder than others? We will also pass the AskIt Basket that contains questions that will stimulate discussion and sharing within the group. No questions are off limits. The grief experience can be a multi-faceted and confusing one and, as we know, is unique in many ways for each person. But it can be helpful to hear other's opinions and experiences as well as share some of your own.

JUNE MEETING

Monday, June 25, 2018
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Men to the Right, Women to the Left - It has long been known that men and women are just "wired" differently and therefore the grief response and journey can be very different for mothers and fathers. This sometimes makes it difficult for couples to relate easily to each other following the death of their child. After our group opening together, we will divide into two groups by gender that will have the opportunity to talk, share and discuss the grief process and journey with others who may truly understand what they are experiencing. The different grieving styles of men and women may also impact your relationship with other family members as well. We especially encourage all fathers to plan to attend.

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:

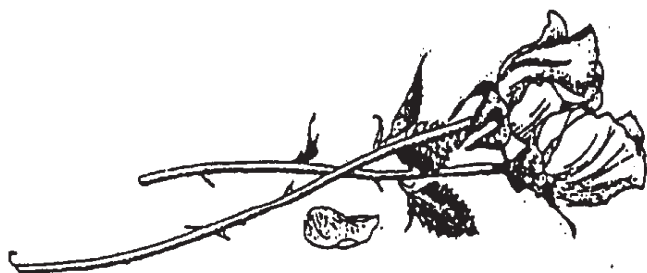
*Mary J. Lindeen in loving memory of her grandson
Drew Lindeen who was born on May 8th*

*Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her daughter
Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill who was born on June 17th*



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,

Hopefully Spring has finally sprung in our area and we can look forward to some sunny and warm weather ahead. Summer can be a tough time for bereaved families, especially if this will be the first summer without your loved one. It seems so much of summer is filled with family-oriented activities such as vacations, a variety of sporting activities your child may have been involved in, perhaps a Vacation Bible School event at your church. It seems as though there is always something out there that reminds us of that beloved person who is no longer with us to enjoy and participate in the round of summer events. You may find it helpful to try and slow your pace down a bit, try to spend some time outdoors, get some casual exercise if you are able. It is so important as the waves of the grief experience ebb and flow, to be mindful of your health, don't overtax yourself with activities, and set aside some quiet time to remember the love that will always remain with you.

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. If you would be interested in helping with this, please contact me at tcftopeka@gmail.com

Registration for the conference and for the hotel is now available on the national TCF website. Check it out at www.compassionatefriends.org There is also a link if you would like to be matched up with a hotel roommate to help cut down on the expense of attending.

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 #E on Memory Pointe at Lake Shawnee. We are so please 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 is currently 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. There will be more information on the Picnic/Dove Release in the July/August edition of this newsletter and also on our Chapter's website under Special Events at www.tcftopeka.org

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 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, 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.
Tallgrass Camp - Harveyville, Kansas
11908 Old Log House Road

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.

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

CALL FOR PHOTOS

If you would like your loved one's photo included in our TCF Chapter's December memorial slide presentation, please do one of the following:

1. If you have computer access and can send a jpg file of your child's photo electronically, please send to: dtucker35@cox.net Be sure to include your loved one's full name, birth and death dates.

2. If you are not able to send a photo file electronically, you may send a photo print (do not send the only copy you have!) so that we may scan it into digital format. Send the photo plus the full name, birth and death dates for your loved one to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of your photo. We will continue to collect photos throughout the year to add to the slide presentation. ***If you have already sent in a photo, you need not resend one.***

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 upcoming newsletters 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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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.
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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.

Pro Print

DIGITAL PRINT AND COPY SERVICES

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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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Jeff Darting, son of Gerry and Judy Darting and brother of Sarah Escobar and Jenny Darting, who was born on June 26th

Michael Donoho, son of Dennis and Tammy Donoho Collins and stepson to Ed Collins and Debbie Donoho, born on June 24th

Randy Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who died on June 10th

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

Jeremy Scott Goehl, son of Danny and Kim Goehl, who died on June 17th

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

Spencer Michael Haynes, son of Shelly Frederick-Haynes, who was born on June 17th

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

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

Jonathan Kaspar, son of Jeffrey and Susan Kaspar, sister of Jen Kaspar who died on June 4th

Joel Andrew Knight, son of Jim and Gloria Knight, born on June 24th



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

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

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

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

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



Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, who was born on July 26th; and died on June 27th

Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill, daughter of Lori Neddermeyer and Eric Naill; step-daughter of Mark Neddermeyer; sister of Jesse and Allie Naill; step-sister of Cale and Braden Neddermeyer; and granddaughter of Bruce and Ginny Miller and Allan and Marge Neddermeyer, born on June 17th

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

Aurora Mae Philippi, daughter of Chris and Triste Philippi, who was born and died June 17th

Kasey Pike, grandson of Grace Reichle, who was born on July 3rd

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

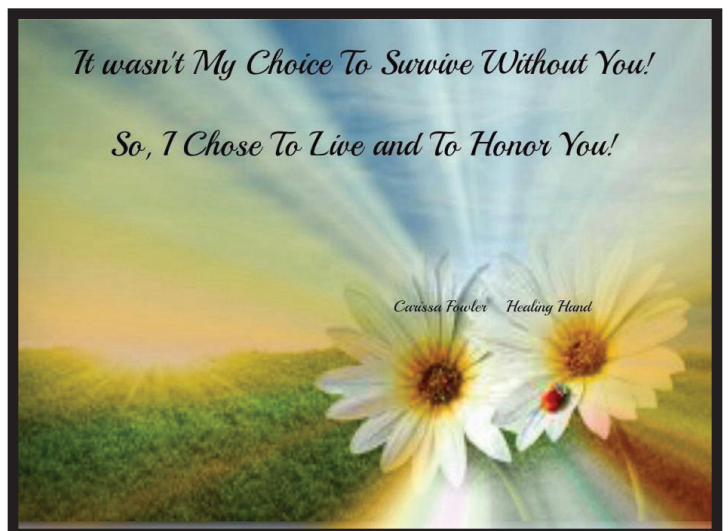
Tony Willey, son of Diana Willey, who was born on July 3rd

This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for June and July.

It wasn't My Choice To Survive Without You!

So, I Chose To Live and To Honor You!

Carissa Fowler Healing Hand



The Dream

A recent dream brought to my mind the analogy of being unjustly condemned to prison compared to losing a loved one to death.

In my dream I was sent to prison for something I didn't do, but was found guilty anyway. I had so much support during the trial and the first week or two of imprisonment...then the visits stopped.

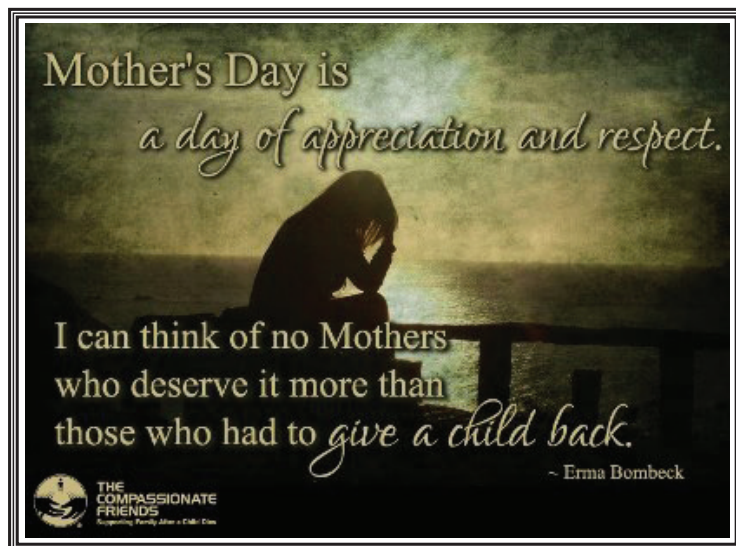
This is so much like the events of illness and death. Friends and family are so supportive visiting our sick loved ones and they are there for the funeral and for a short time following. Naturally most of the visits stop, but those left behind are in a quiet prison of grief.

Time passes and the prisoner is released, but still not free because he must report to a probation officer. Death has somewhat the same effect. Time passes following a loved one's death, we start to rebuild our lives, and grief lingers, but is not as harsh.

Finally probation is over, but the offense is always on your record and life is never the same. Losing a loved one is also forever on this earth and life is never the same.

In memory of our son, Keith Strathman and all our loved ones who left us too early. I pray for all whose lives will "never be the same".

~ Julie Strathman, Seneca, KS



A Day

A laugh a day keeps the heart pumping.

A tear a day keeps the mind clear.

A smile a day gives joy to others.

A hug a day gives the hopeless hope.

A thought a day brings loved ones near.

A memory a day brings you closer to me.

Laughter, tears, smiles, hugs
stitched with thoughts and memories --

They're all in my days without you.

~ Pam Burden, TCF, Augusta, GA

(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.

21 Things I Learned In Our First Year Of Loss

By Emily Graham

We have officially survived our first year of loss. I'm not really sure how. It doesn't seem possible to be standing where we are today. I still wish I would wake up and have it all be a nightmare.

Through this journey we have received a lot of advice. Nothing really prepares you. You simply learn to find comfort in the support you receive. As time goes on you learn coping mechanisms to get through your days and learn to live again.

So much of this journey is individual. All you can do is go through it. Experience it. It has been eye opening. Today I want to share some of what I've learned.

21 Things I Learned In Our First Year Of Loss:

1. It's nothing like I imagined it would be. Those last 12-hours in the hospital I knew were our last. In those moments I imagined life without him. Never seeing him, hugging him, hearing his voice again. An empty seat at the table and in the car. No more memories, holidays, arguments, laughs. Those thoughts, as heartbreaking as they were, never came close to reality.

2. Depression is suffocating. Intense depression took over the first 9-months, though most people would never know. Caring for my other children was too much most days. Every single task is a struggle.

3. Child loss is more prevalent than I ever knew. I couldn't believe the number of people impacted. Becoming part of the club is eye opening. There is an instant bond created the moment you realize you have it in common - Child Loss: It Can Happen To You.

4. You will make people uncomfortable. No one is sure what to say. Everyone walks on pins and needles afraid to upset you. Many dance around the topic or seem to forget entirely. It is up to you to set the stage of how you want it to be.

5. Everyone grieves differently. Every single person. It is not what you expect. Some people don't cry. Humor is a coping mechanism for others. Avoidance. Disinterest. Over the top emotions. Every moment is different for every single person. Just accept it. Allow people to take their own journey.

6. Every single thing will remind you of your loved one. A song on the radio. TV shows they used to watch. Something someone says. A look your other child makes. A smell. Every day activities your family will do that they are no longer a part of. Places they went with you. New places they never saw. Constantly, every day.

7. You will get angry at people that mean well. Things that seem stupid will feel like a big deal. People that have never

lost a child will tell you they know how you feel. Others will say things like, "At least he's in a better place." Some will ignore your loss completely and pretend it never happened. You will learn how to respond in grace.

8. You will hate your new normal. This new life you didn't ask for that you are now forced to live will feel unbearable at times. It doesn't mean you love those in it any less. However, it will never feel the same again.

9. You will feel happiness at times. It will always be coupled with sad. Every moment of happy will have a sad undertone because they are not here with you. I believe it will always be this way. The reverse is also true. Crying and feeling sadness over your loss will have an undertone of happy because it is full of them.

10. The anxiety leading up to milestones is sometimes worse than living those firsts. My mind fills with thoughts of our last time before the milestone date. I feel anxious about that day coming. When the day comes, it is like every other day. Just add a few more memories.

11. I get to choose the moments that are hardest. It is not always a milestone like everyone would expect. Those around you may brace for things they think should affect you. However, I get to choose the days and moments that impact me the hardest.

12. Grief shows up when you least expect it. You rarely know when. It is always when you least expect it. Something will come out of nowhere and knock every ounce of being out of you.

13. You will be a different person. There is a missing link between the person that stands here now and the person I once was. I search hard for ways to get back to that person I was. I miss her. The world is a very different place. My reaction to it has changed dramatically. I have finally learned to put myself and my family first.

14. People will surprise you. Some of the people you thought would be there, aren't. People that really step up may be unexpected. You will find some people leave your life completely. I believe it is all meant to be.

15. Your beliefs will be tested beyond anything you can imagine. Whether you are a religious person or not, your beliefs will be tested. I am crystal clear now. No doubts in my mind. A loss like this triggers a spiritual journey like no other.

16. There are signs everywhere! Your loved one will send you signs. I do not believe in coincidences. Things will pop up at just the right time. They are still here.

21 Things I Learned In Our First Year Of Loss, cont'd

17. You create your own timetable. There are no rules. You do everything at your own pace. I still have his toothbrushes out. It is all OK. You get to decide how, when or if things happen.

18. They want you to be happy! Every decision I make. Every fun thing I force myself to do. All of it is because I know he would want me to be happy. He is there cheering us on. I do these things because of him.

19. Somehow time keeps passing. I never thought I'd make it a year. I never thought I'd make it a month. No matter how much time passes, it is unbelievable. It feels like yesterday.

20. You will survive. I am the first one to say I wish I was with him. Not that I am suicidal or wish for death, but every day I get closer to being with him. It is my motivation in a

way, as morbid as that sounds. By putting one foot in front of the other. Living through each moment you will learn to survive, even thrive. This doesn't mean they are any less on your mind or in your heart.

21. It Is Not Strength, It Is Necessity. People call me strong. They ask how we get through it. They admire us or say we inspire them. It is not strength. It is simply because we have no other choice

About the author: Emily Graham

I'm Emily, a grief blogger living in the Orlando area. Learning to live around the hole my 7-year-old-son left when he died. Sharing my journey through motherhood, child loss, and rebuilding life after.

Source:<https://justplayinghouse.com/grief/21-things-i-learned-in-our-first-year-of-loss>

The Magic of You

What can I do to get better? This is the question most often asked by newly bereaved parents, as if the right actions could work a miracle. They are seeking easy rules, methods or steps of healing.

But there are none. There are no special words, no miraculous system, no magic wand to take the pain away. There is only time, hard work, and compassionate support.

Grief is a process which must be allowed to function thoroughly in order for healing to take place. There are no shortcuts; attempts to ease the process such as through alcohol or drugs often end either in disaster or in complicating the grief process. There is no magic. There is only you, the bereaved person, who must decide for yourself to work within the process to resolve your grief.

No one else can do it for you but others can help by supporting your grief rather than searching for magic words to wish it away. Others can help within The Compassionate Friends by providing models of healed parents who are willing to listen and share.

You can help yourself by being patient with grief instead of searching for easy methods. You can help yourself by learning about the grief process. You can help yourself by sharing your story with others and listening to their stories. You can help yourself by reaching out to others, for helping others is the source of your own healing. Magic pills or incantations? There are none. Look to yourself. The Compassionate Friends can help, but you alone determine the progress of your grief. The magic of healing is within you.

~ Marcia Alig, TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

I Can Only Imagine

I can only imagine
What our hearts would feel
If that day had never happened
If your death had not been real
I can only imagine
What our eyes would see
If they hadn't shed a million tears
Pleading, Why you? Why not me?
I can only imagine
A happier life
One where all your dreams came true
You fell in love and took a wife
I can only imagine
What a wonderful father you'd be
What names you'd give your children
Would you be anything like me?
I can only imagine
If I'll live to see the day
When the mere thought of you
No longer takes my breath away
I can only imagine
If things had ended differently
A family of four, now a family of three
But the one that's missing should of been me
When our work is done
And our time to go has come
Our arms at last again will hold
Brennan, our beloved son
I can only imagine...

~ Tom Murphy, Greater Cincinnati TCF Chapter, OH
in memory of his son, Brennan Murphy

The Therapeutic Tear: Healing Release for Parents

Consider the nature of our loss. Our children have died. The worst nightmare that life can thrust upon humans has become our reality and burden. Our emotions will forever be entwined with the death of our child. Our hearts will never mend. Life will never return to what it once was. Often there is no joy. We have been thrown into a dark purgatory without our child. The sadness is overwhelming, the hopelessness is oppressive. This is our condition, our reality.

Tears are a gift to the parents of those who no longer live. Consider the beautiful nature of the tear. It can well up suddenly or slowly, depending on the circumstance. We can choke back our tears, holding them inside. We may let our tears go, filling our eyes and running down our faces. Occasionally, we dab the corner of our eye before the tear gets an opportunity to be joined by other tears in an unpredictable and visible flood of emotion. But the nature of the tear remains intact. Whether we cry on the inside or cry on the outside is predetermined by society, our genetics and a host of other factors. But we do cry these beautiful tears for our deceased children. These tears somehow remind us of the connection to our children, their departure and our deep, deep loss.

These are beautiful tears of love. These tears express the power of our love for our children who have been stolen by death. Each tear and each bereaved parent is different. What is the reason for uncontrollable, unexpected weeping? Why do some people shed few tears and others cry copiously? Is one form of crying superior to another? What triggers "tears from nowhere?"

Each of us is different. Each of us handles our loss in a unique way. But all of us are crying. For some of us tears remain inside, never to be seen. They build through the years, drowning us with pain. Some of us weep profusely and frequently. Many of us cry without any visible provocation. Some tears are silent, some are accompanied by sobbing.



These tears of ours are as natural as the sunshine on a warm spring day. These are healing tears, though they are shed in great sorrow. Together we will discuss the nature of our tears. We will remember the first tears shed in shocked sobbing, wailing screams. We will remember later tears as we progressed on the road of life without our child, tears shed on holidays, anniversaries, birthdays and special occasions. Tears shed for no apparent reason. We will consider our tears today....their meaning, their value and their beauty. Our tears are a portal that opens for us to feel our loss, feel our love for our child and feel our own humanity.

Please join us as we discuss the "Therapeutic Tear" with our Compassionate Friends. We will explore and learn together as we travel this sad path.

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

WHY ME? - The Unanswerable Question

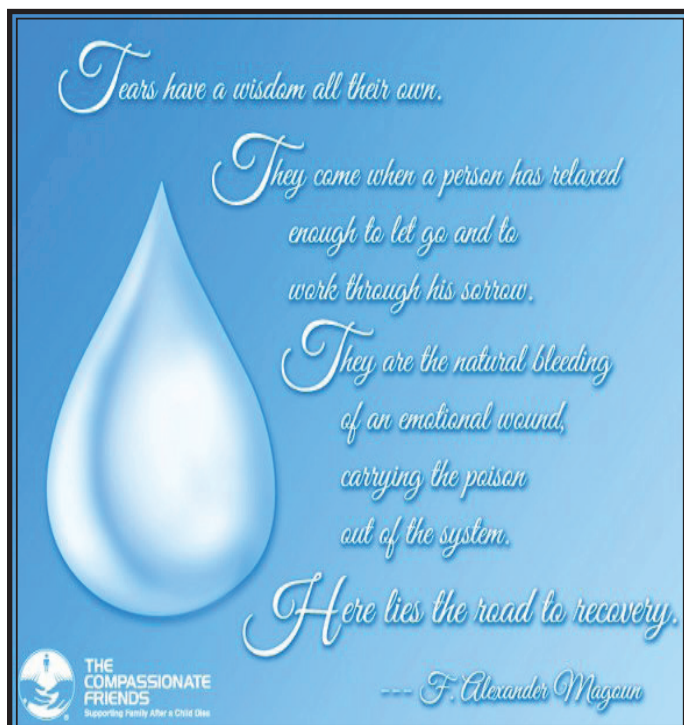
Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

~ Polly Moore, TCF Nashville, TN



The Sign

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

The Black-eyed Susan is an independent wild flower that cannot be forced to grow out of season. The growing period for these wild flowers is the middle of June to the middle of August. But there, the first of September in the year of my son's death, in the center of Jody's grave, was a single



perfectly formed Black-eyed Susan. It stood with strength and reassurance. It was all alone in the still, unsettled dirt covering the grave. There was not even a blade of grass or a single weed around.

I wept with mixed emotions of intense loss and love, feeling both distance and closeness, sadness and sudden relief. I saw

it as a sign from my darling Jody. It spoke to me words from my dead child. "Do not cry. Do not despair. I love you and never intended for you to suffer so much. Please forgive me, and please be happy with the rest of your life. Please believe that I'm okay and at peace."

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

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

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

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

Relationships Do Change

Does it seem to you as if relationships with your family and friends have changed since the death of your child or sibling? You are not alone. In her book When the Bough Breaks, Judith Bernstein selects these expressive quotations from other writers' works to introduce the chapters on "Family Relationships" and "Social Relationships," respectively:

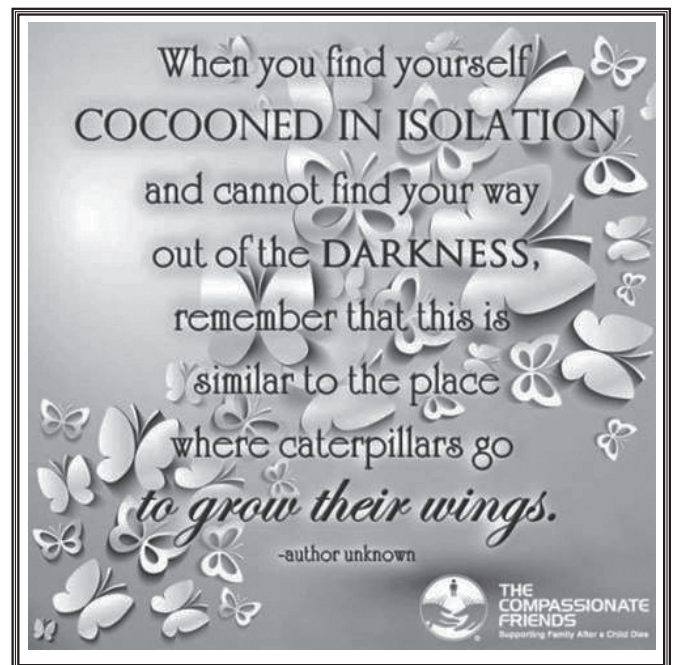
"Death of a child member becomes an important identifying piece of information about the family. It is woven into its history and into the everyday operation of members' lives. The child who has died continues to be a family member after death. Parents are forever parents of a dead child as well as of the surviving children. The dead child lives in memory. The family grieves for him and remembers him with little comfort and support from the society around them."

~ Joan H. Arnold and Penelope B. Gemma
A Child Dies: A Portrait of Family Grief

"When people outside the immediate family are encountered who do not allow ... expressions of emotions and thoughts about deceased children, it creates a resentment that is difficult to control. Subsequently, the time comes when parents begin to separate themselves from insensitive and uncaring people in their environments who insist on keeping channels of communication closed.

Many times a wedge is driven between those suffering the loss and very dear and close friends. We can refer to this as a "wedge of ignorance"—ignorance about the great importance of open communication."

~ Ronald J. Knapp,
Beyond Endurance



Healing and Hope

For a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, "It's different with me! You don't understand!" This is the "normal" response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.

Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child's death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of "Why?"

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary), that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought gone forever. Each one must use one's spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return is not realistic, although the term "recovery" is used. I prefer the term "healing," a process whereby our lives come to a new "normal." Healing implies (a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and (b) our slowly learning to resume productive

relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!! One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time!

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child's death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when we recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that's all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

~ Robert Gloor, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

When Fathers Weep at Graves

I see them weep
the fathers at the stones

taking off the brave armor
forced to wear in the work place

clearing away the debris
with gentle fingers

inhaling the sorrow
diminished by anguish

their hearts desiring
what they cannot have--

to walk hand in hand
with children no longer held--

to all the fathers who leave a part
of their hearts at the stones

may breezes underneath trees of time
ease their pain

as they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

~ Alice J. Wisler

*For David, in memory
of our son Daniel*



*Remembering
all bereaved fathers
this Father's Day*

The Compassionate Friends

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

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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.