



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
National Headquarters, P. O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free 877-969-0010; Fax (630) 990-0246

National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

May ~ June 2019
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629
(785) 272-4895

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 27, 2019
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Am I Making Progress? - Sometimes with the unpredictable nature of our grief journey it is difficult to tell whether or not we are making progress towards a place of healing. At this meeting we will talk about some of the indicators that can assure us that we are moving forward on our journey. Those who are further along on their journey ~ seasoned grievers ~ will have the opportunity to share with the more newly bereaved members who can ask questions and share their own experiences both positive and negative. Hope comes even in small victories – this is how we can see our progress. Hope to see you there!

JUNE MEETING

Monday, June 24, 2019
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:

*Darren and Gloria Forshee in loving memory of their
son Anthony James Forshee who died on May 15th*

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

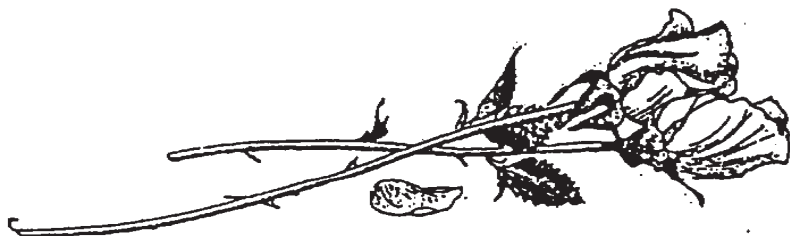


*Mary J. Lindeen in loving memory of her grandson
Drew Lindeen who was born on May 8th*

*Mark and 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,

I wanted to let you all know that, after 26 years, I will be stepping down as Topeka TCF Chapter Leader June 1st. My husband Gary and I have been blessed to work with so many caring people over the years as we individually walked our own grief path, and helped others as they journeyed on theirs. We have done our TCF work in memory of our beloved daughter Rachael whose death left such a gaping hole in both our hearts and our family. We both know that Compassionate Friends was indeed our lifeline back to a life of positive purpose and joy. As with all bereaved parents, we will always carry the pain of Rachael's loss, but through TCF we have found the ability to move forward in our lives, forever carrying our love for and memories of Rachael with us.



Co-Leader Damon Tucker will take over the administrative operation of the Topeka Chapter. He will continue to be assisted by our Steering Committee whose members are: Chris and Trista Phillipi, Treasurer Jennifer Meyer, Collene Tucker, and Marty and Debbie Tyson. I hope you will continue to support them in their efforts on behalf of the Topeka TCF Chapter so that, in keeping with the Compassionate Friends vision statement "Everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped." Gary and I will remain as Advisory Members of the Steering Committee.

I will continue to produce this newsletter at present, but am interested in finding someone who would be willing to take it over in the future. I have lots of material to use and would be more than willing to work with someone interested in helping with this aspect of the Chapter. I will also continue to update and monitor the Topeka Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org)

My special thanks to all those individuals who have helped with the Topeka Chapter during my time as Chapter Leader. You have honored your loved ones' lives with your commitment and efforts on behalf of The Compassionate Friends.

National Conference Registration Open. The 2019 National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held this year in Philadelphia, PA from July 19-21. The conference will offer a hundred workshops of topics related to grief and loss of a child, Sharing Sessions, wonderful Keynote Speakers, a Memorial Candle Lighting Program, and the Annual Walk to Remember. You can find information on how to register, make a hotel reservation, etc. on the National TCF website (www.compassionatefriends.org) A TCF Conference is a wonderfully supportive and enlightening event to attend as you gather with other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings from across the country (and sometimes from around the world) to share your experiences, your concerns, your journey and your hope. I hope many of you may be able to attend.



The Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember is a highlight of every TCF National Conference. It was created as a symbolic way to show the love we carry for the children we mourn. Held on the final day of the National Conference. Since its inception in 2000, the Walk to Remember has taken on many distinctive facets. There is the main Walk to Remember where those attending the conference join with local bereaved families and others who fly in from across the country just for the Walk. As many as 1400 have participated. Some go the full distance while others only walk a short way knowing that in participating, they are remembering. Special Walk to Remember t-shirts are given to all who register, as well as walk bibs where the names of the children being remembered can be written.

The Walk to Remember is also used as a major fundraiser to help support the work of The Compassionate Friends. Many participants seek pledges from relatives, friends, neighbors, and business acquaintances, turning in the dollars they have raised prior to the start of the event.

Submit a Name to be Carried

We invite you to send us your child's, grandchild's or sibling's name so that it can lovingly be carried by volunteers in our 20th Annual Walk to Remember, a time set aside to honor and remember the children gone much too soon.



Sponsor a Walk Sign

TCF also offers the opportunity to sponsor a personalized walk sign that includes your child's/grandchild's/sibling's photo and name. These walk signs will be featured along the walk route. For those who are unable to attend the National Conference, photos will be taken of the Walk to Remember and a link will be posted on our website. There is also an option to have your walk sign shipped to you. To submit a name to be carried in the Walk or to sponsor a Walk sign, go to www.compassionatefriends.org

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

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom

Love Gifts

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

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

- ♥ *Darren & Gloria Forshee in loving memory of their son Anthony James Forshee who died on May 15th*
- ♥ *Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter Teresa Jenkins Carson on the 26th anniversary of her death*
- ♥ *Margaret & Tad Kramar in loving memory of her son Spenser Thomas Good who died on April 30th*
- ♥ *Todd & Kathleen Williams in loving memory of their son 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".

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

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

An Update on the Chapter Newsletter

As I mentioned in several newsletters, we have established an electronic list of those who prefer to receive the newsletter via e-mail. If you have not requested to be on the e-newsletter list, you will continue to be mailed a hard copy of the newsletter. Remember, you can also always access the current and past issues of our newsletter on our Chapter website at www.tcftopeka.org under "Newsletters". Those families whose loved one died in 2018 are automatically kept on the mailing list for one full year unless they request in writing to have their name removed. You are all asked to send any address changes (hard copy or e-mail) to tcftopeka@gmail.com

Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the Topeka Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) as well as on national's TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:
 2020 ~ Atlanta, GA 2021 ~ Detroit, MI
 2022 ~ Houston, TX

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

838 MASSACHUSETTS ST
LAWRENCE, KS 66044
785.842.3610

1033 SW GAGE BLVD, STE 200
TOPEKA, KS 66604
785.272.0070

And We Remember.....

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

Matthew Wayne Arnold, son of Don and Susan Arnold, who was 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, who died on June 17th

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

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

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

Michael Donoho, son of Dennis and Tammy Donoho Collins and stepson to Ed Collins and Debbie Donoho, who was 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

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

Colby Dean 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 who 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

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

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

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

Richard L. "Rick" Linder, Jr., son of Richard and the late Pat Linder, who was 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, who died on July 28th

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

Clay Meyer, son of Jim and Linda Meyer, who was born on July 26th; 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 who died on June 10th

Aurora Mae Philippi, daughter of Chris and Trista Philippi, who was born and died on 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, who was 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 was 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

(Use the form on opposite page 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. This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for June and July)



There Are Places I Remember...

By Bill Sowers, Rachel's Dad
Topeka TCF Chapter

For months after Rachel's death Diana and I would avoid driving anywhere near the children's hospital where she'd died. The pain was so intense. The fact that the hospital was in a large urban center we often had to drive through made travel a bit comical at times diverting five miles out of the way. Ten years later I can smile at that man who drove so far out of his way to avoid that searing pain of seeing a building. I understand why he did it though and I do not knock him.

Many of us have places which bring out the pain of grief powerfully within us... a church or synagogue, a school, a playground, perhaps a bedroom in our house or a favorite camping site. We ache at the sight of these places gripped by a yearning for what will never be again. The memories simmer in our brains, jabbing at our hearts. We may turn away suddenly as though slapped hard or stare empty eyed, weak in the knees. Tears, anger, guilt or just a heaviness in the air might smother us.

Sometimes we have to face these places. We have to pass them or even enter them frequently if not daily... the work room in the basement, the baseball diamond down the block, the expressway home or the cemetery within sight of our front door. We may deer-in-the-headlight the journey or just suck it up and deal with it.

Life is a journey through places touched by people, animals, activities and events that leave their mark on us... an imprint if you will. These places can entice our senses into memories long after the people and events have passed. The key for me in overcoming the intensity of those place-related memories that brought Rachel and her life experiences to mind was in eventually accepting the pain and the memories related to a place. In the end I came to treasure those memory places... the good, the bad and the ugly as "historical markers"... settings in the life of this amazing person, my daughter though, years later, some can still poke at my heart as I pass them by.



At Last, At Last

At last. At last!
This exhausting work of grieving
Has ever so gradually
Come to a point of achieving
Some goals . . . some directions,
Some peace . . . some hope,
More patience with self,
More strength to cope.

~Margie Turbyfill, TCF, Knoxville, TN

(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.

THANK YOU ...THANK YOU ... THANK YOU

The Topeka Chapter wants to give a big Shout Out and Thank You to Glenda Senne for organizing a wonderful Quartermania fundraising event for our group. Thanks also to the many Vendors who participated and all those who brought goodies for our Bake Sale. Held on April 13th, this event raised over \$600.00 for our Topeka TCF Chapter. This amount will help pay the costs of printing and mailing two of the six newsletters we produce each year. Since we are not allowed to charge any dues or fees to participate in our Chapter Support Group Meetings and Special Memorial Events, we rely on such fundraising and Love Gift/Newsletter Sponsorships donations to help meet our expenses.

The Quartermania was a fun event and Thank You again to all who participated!

~ TCF Steering Committee



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/>

Organizing Your Griefcase

By R. Glenn Kelly, www.grievingmen.com

Time can often be an immeasurable concept in grief. Case in point, our profound loss always seems like it happened yesterday, irrespective of taking place months, years, or even decades before. When my dear son's precious heart failed after a relatively simple medical procedure, he was taken from this world in what seemed like the snap of a finger. In reality, however, an army sized cadre of skilled doctors, nurses and technicians spent exhaustive amounts of time and effort in trying to revive my Jonathan that fateful morning.

When thinking back, as I often do at the uncontrollable whim of my memory, it seems as if one moment I was planning the eventual trip home from the hospital with my child, and the next I was handed my very own Griefcase. It was given to me by the doctor who tried in vain to revive my child. She was certainly compassionate, if not emotional herself, but I wonder if fully aware of what she gave me? After all, only one who has experienced the loss of a loved one knows that there is no "getting over it." There is no normal any longer, and what was once an unquestioned certainty is no longer even a possibility. Was that doctor, a stranger just a short time before, aware of exactly what was within the Griefcase she issued to me?

What is this Griefcase I am referring to? Please allow me to point towards the keyword, "grief." It is a word that we bereaved souls hear almost ad nauseam once we became a member in this unwanted club. Yet, the word grief is not an emotion, is it? It is not really what we are feeling after our loss. If asked how we feel, we truthfully respond that we feel sad, or angry at the loss. We might feel confused or lonely at the moment, or any combination of feelings that repeatedly pound at us in unending waves. However, rarely, if ever, would we respond to the question by saying we feel "grieved." No. Grief is not an emotion.

Those emotions, at first so overwhelming, if not somewhat debilitating, are handed to us totally against our will. We certainly did not ask for them, and in many losses, such as mine, are given to us by a total stranger. We will carry those emotions with us on some level until we join our loved one again. We carry them within the word grief. Grief is the case that holds our emotions from the loss, and therefore, a Griefcase. Now, if you will allow me a stretch of the imagination, I ask that you think of the old spy movies, where a briefcase was physically handcuffed to the secret agent. Somewhat like that spy's attaché, our Griefcase becomes a permanent part of who we are. However, unlike that spy, ours can never be removed. There simply is no lock and key to be found here on Earth.

Early in our journey, those individual emotions inside our Griefcase are like separate manila folders found in any ordinary briefcase, each tab labeled with the contents inside. Yet, the folders are at first jumbled, overstuffed, and so very

confusing. Nothing seems to make sense, and the whole thing is overwhelmingly burdensome, and so very heavy early in loss. Because of that, we sometimes refrain from any actions, as the thought of the emotional weight serves to anchor us in place. If we do carry on with it regardless of painful effort, it will get in the way at first, as we find ourselves stumbling over it as we try to move forward.



Occasionally, we might even forget for a moment it is even there. We laugh, or begin to enjoy an outing, when suddenly we are to be stopped in our tracks, as the chain which secures the Griefcase to our wrist has gone taught. It simply cannot be left behind and forgotten.

The Griefcase certainly does not have to remain a heavy burden in our journey to a life of peace and purpose. Although it starts out disorganized, confusing and oftentimes frightening, we can face each emotion and begin to organize what is inside. We open the case, and then each folder, working through the confusion and removing such things as false anger and false guilt. We discover aspects within one emotion that actually belong in the file of another, or is possibly redundant. We can simply ball those up and toss them out. Then, by addressing each folder, and not allowing any to remain untended, we slowly begin to lighten the load. While it certainly will not be easy, and it will be a lifelong task, your Griefcase will slowly become less of a burden in your journey.

Take heart, fellow grievers. Although we never wanted the Griefcase, it will actually be a wonderful part of who we are to become. To realize this, we must be aware that we could never completely empty any of the emotional folders found inside, even if we tried. Yet, we must always strive to discard all that which is false, harmful or unnecessary. What remains will be the experiences that touched our soul, regardless of how agonizing. These are the foundational building blocks of becoming an amazingly compassionate supporter, with honest empathy, and a true desire to be there for others on the same journey. This is one of the blessed gifts our loved ones left for us.

However, if you should find yourself having difficulties working through the folders within your Griefcase, I want to bring one folder in particular to your attention. Every one of us will have this folder, and it can always be found in that pocket inside the lid. It is boldly labeled, "Unconditional Love." It is already well organized and contains all it should, and actually has room to add more over time. If ever you find

Organizing Your Griefcase (cont'd)

yourself feeling the overbearing weight of the Griefcase, and despondency seems to be the norm, reach up and pull out that file. Allow the unconditional love you feel for the one you lost to lift you up, so you may face the other dark files in the case, and continue your journey forward.

On a final note, as you remove all the confusing emotions from your Griefcase, not only will it be lighter and far less a burden in your daily life, but it will also have some available space inside. That space belongs to you. Why not give yourself a break and toss in some sunscreen and flip flops? You deserve some peace.

Father's Day

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

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

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

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

Fathers often show their hurts differently, often internally. But they do hurt.

~ Gerry Hunt, TCF, White River Junction, VT

About the Author: R. Glenn Kelly is a writer, public speaker, Grief Support Advocate, and grieving father. After the tragic loss of his teenage son, he left behind the corporate world to work exclusively with bereaved men, and the women who want to understand them. R. Glenn is the author of the self-help book, "Sometimes I Cry in the Shower: A Grieving Father's Journey to Wholeness and Healing," and has appeared on television, support workshops and even college universities to discuss moving forward towards the new normal in recovering from traumatic loss. Look for Sometimes I Cry in the Shower in paperback and eBook online at R. Glenn's website, grievingmen.com, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and bookstores everywhere.

(Reprinted with permission from *Grief Digest* magazine, Centering Corporation, Omaha, Nebraska, 866-218-0101.)

*As the day approaches
I wonder how I will react -
Am I still a father?
I will sit quietly never
allowing friends and family
to see how I feel.
I miss my son, but I can't
allow myself to "break"
I must remain strong
And always be the "rock"
I wish I could just let
someone know how much I
miss my little angel,
How much I cry and how
much I miss hearing,
"Dad, I love you."
I am a father, but I
wonder will I just pretend,
as usual, that
"it doesn't bother me"
Remember me,
for I hurt, too, on this
special day.*



~ TCF, Tampa, FL

Graduation

The racks are filled with cards again
For graduation's near,
I won't be getting one for you
It's just another year.

Your card remains unbought again
Among the huge displays
Of those for every person whose
Accomplishments we praise.

The cards are filled with happy thoughts
Of future, dreams, success;
The words foretell what lies ahead
Of plans for happiness.

There are no cards that tell the truth
Of what it's like today;
The words "unfinished" and "regret"
Too difficult to say.

I think I might just buy that card,
The one for you this year;
I'll find the one that says it all --
The words concise and clear.

This card will be the perfect one,
The words like "proud" and "love"
Will say just what I'll tell you
When we meet again above.

~ Linda Meyer, Madison, KS
in memory of her son Clay



For Our Siblings.....

DREAMING OF YOU

There is this space between the dream
world I have left,
And the busy day I am about to join.
Soon I will return to a world in which
You do not live anymore.
I want to linger in this space,
And remember every detail
Of my dream of you.
I can clearly see your face,
You haven't aged.
You are still my older brother,
Even though you are
Playing with my children,
Whom you have never met.
I touch your arm,
And tell you about my life now.
I can hardly believe
You are here with me...
I want to stay right here with you,
Not let you out of my sight,
And bask in your presence...
I have missed you so much.
As I recall details of my dream,
I miss you so intensely,
My heart aches...
I don't want to open my eyes...
I don't want to leave that space.
As right in this space,
I allow myself to be with you,
To think of you,
And in that moment,
I feel so close to you.
It is so long since I have seen you,
Those dreams are the closest
I can get to you.
It's a bittersweet experience,
Dreaming of you...
I've opened my eyes,
I'm getting ready for the day.
Soon, that sensation
Of being so close to you
Will be gone...
And I don't want to let it go.

~ Claire Kuhnell
Brothers & Sisters of TCF/Victoria



We cannot, after all, judge a biography by its length,
by the number of pages in it; we must judge by the
richness of the contents. Sometimes the
"unfinisheds" are among the most
beautiful symphonies.

~ Viktor Frankl
from The Doctor and The Soul

A Mother's Thoughts . . .

YESTERDAY . . .

We dreamed of how our future would be.
Of times we'd have, my child and me.
Whether joy or pain, laughter or tears,
We'd stand together through the years.
A promise of what life should always be,
Of a child so dear, ever loving me.

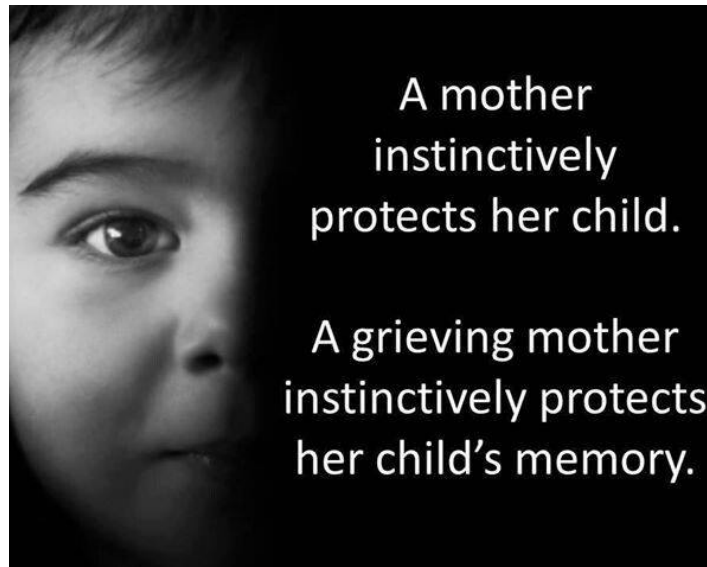
TODAY . . .

My heart sobs with uncontrollable grief,
I search for answers, but find no relief.
These skies have darkened, no longer bright,
For my child is gone, forever from sight.
The dreams we shared can never be,
They're left to linger in my memory.

TOMORROW . . .

My heart will push aside this cloud
That darkens my life like a heavy shroud.
Once again I'll see the dawning light,
And know my child's love still burns bright.
I'll remember the moments we both shared;
I'll remember our love and how we cared;
I'll remember my child now lives in me,
And His YESTERDAYS shall always be.

~ Carol Cichella, TCF, Rockford, IL



Mother's Day

Petunias in a jelly jar
held out for me to see,
On Mother's Day for 13 years
My son would give to me.

Petunias bobbing brightly,
they front a graveyard stone,
Watered by my salty tears.
This Mother's Day alone.

*~ Toni Marx
TCF, Springfield, IL*



For Max . . .

You are not lost to me.
An echo of memory,
You live,
You dance,
A waltz of my heart.
You sing sweet lullabies
To my brave future,
A symphonic melody of you --
My finest song.

You are my postscript and my landmark,
You are the sun at midnight,
A beacon on a dim path
That summons my bravery.
In the wild wind's hum,
You live,
You soar with all dreams
And hold them in your steady soul
For me.

And I, your handmaiden,
Who knows your touch of grace on my shoulder,
Knew you then and always,
And remember you most dearly --
A wonderfully furious delight
That chimes a cacophony of love
In my purple heart.

~Mary Butenas, TCF, Atlanta, GA

Does Changed Grief Mean I've Changed?

By Harriet Hodgson

My daughter Helen, mother of my twin grandchildren, died 11 years ago. The 10th anniversary of her death was especially hard and I'm not sure why. I only knew that Helen wasn't part of my life. Death robbed me of a future with her, a painful truth I face each day.

I wasn't just grieving for my daughter. Three more family members died the same year—my father-in-law, my brother, and the twins' father. Two nagging questions kept appearing in my mind: Could I survive such sorrow? If I survived, would I be the same person?

The cause of death influences grief. Helen died from the injuries she received in a car crash. Mayo Clinic surgeons operated on her for 20 hours and couldn't save her life. Blunt Force Trauma was the cause of death, three words I don't like to type, let alone say.

Experience influences grief. My father and mother had died, aunts and uncles had died, friends and beloved pets had died. I thought these experiences would help me grieve for Helen and they did. But the death of a child is like no other.

Helen's death was sudden and I wasn't prepared for it. I couldn't waste time on self-pity, however, because my husband and I were appointed as the twins' guardians. I made a promise to myself and vowed that death would not prevail. Life would prevail.

As months became years, I realized I was changing. I didn't think of Helen every minute. I was able to tell stories about her without sobbing. I wrote articles and books about grief reconciliation/recovery. I gave workshops about affirmation writing as a grief recovery step. While hope was on the horizon, I wondered if I was forgetting Helen.

I wasn't. Lynda Cheldlin Fell, a bereaved parent and co-founder of the International Grief Institute, thinks we grow into our grief. In the beginning, grief knocks us down flat, and we don't think we'll be able to stand again. But the human spirit is resilient and, if we do our grief work and have support, we can stand again and stand tall.

Before Helen died I knew what was important and what wasn't. Today, I'm acutely aware of these differences and grateful for every moment of life. I'm more empathetic than I used to be and try to help others who are grieving.

I honor Helen with Action Memorials, the term I created to describe things I do to honor of my deceased loved ones. We give to the local food bank each year in memory of Helen, for example. Helen had a quick wit and every time I have a belly laugh I dedicate it to her—another Action Memorial.

Did grief change me? Of course, the answer is yes, but it's a qualified answer. The core values I had before Helen died—honesty, hard work, persistence, kindness—are the same. My personality is the same, only I consider myself an improved version of me. I'm a stronger person than I was in 2007 when Helen died.

Grief experts Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley say grief changes us, but it doesn't define us. With the help of loved ones, caring friends, and organizations such as The Grief Toolbox, I created a new life from the ashes of grief. This isn't the life I envisioned, but it's a happy, satisfying life. Grief changed me and I changed myself.

I'm still growing into my grief.

(About the author: Harriet Hodgson has been an independent journalist for 35+ years. She is a member of the Association of Health Care Journalists, Association for Death Education and Counseling, Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support, and World Speakers Association. Hodgson is a Forum Moderator/Writer for www.opentohope.com and author of eight grief resources.)

The Child That's Not There

The child that's not there
Takes up every piece of me
The child that's not there
Consumes my every thought
The child that's not there
Makes me feel like I failed
The child that's not there
Took away a main reason for being
But...

The children that are there
Still somehow bring me joy
The children that are there
Still need my love
The children that are there
Don't need any more grief
The children that are there
Force me to go on

~ Tricia Palmer, TCF, Tidewater, VA
in memory of her son, Gabriel Boyer



We Don't Recover from Grief, and That's Okay

By Eleanor Haley, *What's Your Grief.com*

I need to tell you that, in the face of significant loss, we don't "recover" from grief.

Yes, I'm using the royal "we" because you and I are all a part of this club.

I also need to tell you that not recovering from grief doesn't doom you to a life of despair. Let me reassure you, there are millions of people out there, right now, living normal and purposeful lives while also experiencing ongoing or, dare I say, unresolved grief.

All the things you've heard about getting over grief, going back to normal, and moving on – they are misrepresentations of what it means to love someone who has died. I'm sorry, I know us human-people appreciate things like closure and resolution, but this isn't how grief goes.

This isn't to say that "recovery" doesn't have a place in grief – it's simply 'what' we're recovering from that needs to be redefined. To "recover" means to return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength, and as many would attest, when someone very significant dies, we never return to a pre-loss "normal". The loss, the person who died, our grief – they all get integrated into our lives and they profoundly change how we live and experience the world.

What will, hopefully, return to a general baseline is the level of intense emotion, stress, and distress that a person experiences in the weeks and months following their loss. So perhaps we recover from the intense distress of grief, but we don't recover from the grief itself.

Now you could say that I'm getting caught up in semantics, but sometimes semantics matter. Especially, when trying to describe an experience that, for so many, is unfamiliar and frightening. Grief is one of those experiences you can never fully understand until you actually experience it and, until that time, all a person has to go on is what they've observed and what they've been told.

The words we use to label and describe grief matter and, in many ways, these words have been getting us into trouble for decades. In the context of grief, words like denial, detachment, unresolved, recovery, and acceptance (to name a few) could be interpreted many different ways and some of these interpretations offer false impressions and false promises.

Interestingly, when many of these words were first used by grief theorists starting in the early 20th century, their intent was to help describe grief. I have no doubt that in the contexts in which they were working, these words and their operational definitions were useful and effective. It's when these descriptions reach our broader society without explanation or nuance, or when they are misapplied by those who position themselves as experts – that they go terribly awry.

So going back to the beginning, we don't recover from grief after the loss of someone significant. Grief is born when someone significant dies – and as long as that person remains significant – grief will remain.

Ongoing grief is normal, not dysfunctional. It's also not dysfunctional to experience unpleasant grief-related thoughts and emotions from time-to-time, sometimes even years later. Humans are meant to experience both sides of the emotional spectrum – not just the warm and fuzzy half. As grieving people, this is especially true. Where there are things like love, appreciation, and fond memory, there will also be sadness, yearning, and pain. And though these experiences seem in opposition to one another, we can experience them all at the same time.

Sure, people may push you to stop feeling the pain, but this is misguided. If the pain exists, it makes sense, because there will never come a day when you won't wish for one more moment, one more conversation, one last hello, or one last goodbye. You learn to live with these wishes and you learn to accept that they won't come true – not here on Earth – but you don't stop wishing for them.

And let me reassure you, experiencing pain doesn't negate the potential for healing. With constructive coping and maybe a little support, the intensity of your distress will lessen and your healing will evolve over time. Though there will be many ups and downs, you should eventually reach a place where you're having just as many good days as bad...and then perhaps more good days than bad...until one day you may find that your bad grief days are few and far between.

But the grief, it's always there, like an old injury that aches when it rains. And though this prospect may be scary in the early days of grief, I think in time you'll find that you wouldn't have it any other way. Grief is an expression of love – these things grow from the same seed. Grief becomes a part of how we love a person despite their physical absence; it helps connect us to memories of the past; it bonds us with others through our shared humanity, and it helps provide perspective on our immense capacity for finding strength and wisdom in the most difficult of times.

Source: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-recovery-is-not-a-thing/>

"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

Helping Others Remember . . .

Our friends and family love us and want to spare us from additional pain. But they do not realize that by avoiding the subject of our deceased child, they try to invalidate our continuing love for our child. By joining us in the small everyday conversations and remembering how Johnny liked ... or Sally would have ...or remember when he did ...they help us realize we are not the only ones who remember. It is up to each parent to set the tone for this to happen. If we naturally bring up our child's name, it lets others know they can too. A simple, "Thank you for sharing that about ... it lets me know you think of him/her, too," encourages others to continue mentioning their names.

By creating a low-key way to remember birthdays, it opens the door to others to remember our child and share thoughts. I have baked a cake each birthday since my son died. If family and friends would like to visit and share some cake, they can remember that my child's' birthday was a happy occasion for us all. If they prefer to keep the conversation light or just be with me, that's fine. Just knowing we all remember is what is important.

By sharing a card (probably from another TCF parent) that simply says I'm thinking of you on your child's anniversary, you help teach others how important it is to remember - and to let others know you remember. As the years pass and fewer thoughts about your child are expressed, it is these simple acts of love that give bereaved parents the added strength to face another year without their child.

REMNANTS

Glimpses of you everywhere
Often catch me unaware.
Tell-tale remnants of the past,
Carefree days that couldn't last,
Echoes of a joyous laugh,
Comic books, a photograph.

Calliopes and carousels,
Haunting songs weave mystic spells,
Relics from the past will wane,
But in my heart
You'll still remain.

~Lily DeLauder, TCF/North Hollywood, CA

At holidays, you can discreetly add a "special remembrance" ornament to your tree. Or donate something to charity in your child's' name. By lighting a special candle or including your child's name in grace, you quietly let others know you remember and your child is still an important member of the family, even if he isn't physically at the table.

Some parents set up scholarships in their child's name, or donate to a cause or organization that was important to their child. Not only does this help another child who was probably close to yours in age, it gives the parents the satisfaction of knowing that someone else remembers their child.

Collecting butterflies or angels is another subtle way for you and others to show you remember your child. Each time someone adds to my collection, it is as if they are saying, "Yes, I think of him, too." The tangible act of holding something in your hand that symbolizes the love you have for your child is such a comfort.

Try to remember the more comfortable you are in speaking about your child and sharing your feelings, the more comfortable others will be in doing the same. For many years, death was a taboo subject, and the bereaved were supposed to get on with life. By encouraging others to share their memories and love for your child, you help change this attitude. Every small step we take now makes it easier for the thousands of other parents who will be facing this in the future.

~ Lynn Vines, TCF/ South Bay, Los Angeles, CA

HOPE

Hope is not an easy word for griever
but we, more than most others,
need to understand
what hope can mean to us.

Hope means finding the strength
to live with grief.

Hope means nurturing with grace.
The joy of remembrance.

Hope means embracing
with tenderness and pride
our own life
and the gifts left to us
by those we have lost.

~ Sascha Wagner
from WINTERSUN (1996)



The Compassionate Friends

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

**A self-help organization offering friendship and
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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.