



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

ADVISORY BOARD - Topeka Chapter
Rev. Art Donnelly, Second Presbyterian Church
Chaplain Ty Petty, MDiv., L.S.D.C.S.W.
Colleen Ellis, L.S.C.W., Family Therapist
Donna Mathena-Menke, Funeral Director/Bereaved Parent
Donna Kidd, Bereaved Parent
Byron Waldy, Chaplain/Counselor

NEWSLETTER - Volume 3, Issue No. 5
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

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

SPECIAL EVENT

Saturday, September 29, 2018
Shelter House #3 on Memory Pointe
Lake Shawnee ` Topeka, KS
11:30 a.m. ~ 2:30 p.m.

Please Note Location and DATE Change!!

25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release - We invite you to join us for this special event in loving memory of all our children, grandchildren and siblings who "left too soon". The event will include a potluck luncheon, a Memorial Program and a Dove Release. This year we welcome singer/songwriter Alan Pederson who will be providing music for our event. You also have the opportunity to sponsor a Dove in memory of your loved one. This event is held at Shelter House #3 at Lake Shawnee. This shelter house is located on the **west side** of Lake Shawnee on Memory Pointe. There was a yellow RSVP/ Dove Sponsorship Form in the July/August Newsletter or you can print one from the Topeka TCF Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) under Special Events. This event **takes the place** of our regular support group meeting for September. We hope to see you there!

OCTOBER MEETING

Monday, October 22, 2018
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Handling the Holidays - Suggestions & Strategies - It's getting to be "that" time of year again when we are inundated with preparations for the upcoming holidays - Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza and New Years. Holiday times can be especially difficult for grieving families and this meeting will address some of the issues we face during the season of holidays. We will also talk about strategies to make the holidays less stressful and ways in which you can remember your loved one at holiday time. We invite you to bring your questions, concerns and also to share things you have found helpful in dealing with the holidays.

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:

*Suzannah Anderson in loving memory of her daughter
Olivia Lynn Anderson who was born on October 11th*

*Brenda Bissey in loving memory of her daughter
Robin Lynn Paulson who was born on October 8th*

*Duane and Mary Eberhardt in loving memory of their son Jerry
Eberhardt who was born on September 1st and died on October 25th*

*Joe and Ann Steinbock in loving memory of their son
Jeff Steinbock who died on October 11th*

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

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.

Copyright ©2018 The Compassionate Friends
All rights reserved



MARK YOUR CALENDAR !



25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release

**Saturday, September 29, 2018
Shelterhouse #3 on Memory Lane
Lake Shawnee, Topeka, KS**

Further info and RSVP Form inside this newsletter

We Need Not Walk Alone

Dove Release Set for Saturday, September 29th

Time is quickly approaching for the Topeka TCF Chapter's 25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release. We certainly hope many of you are planning to attend this program in memory of all of our children, grandchildren and siblings who left too soon. We are excited this year to welcome Bereaved Father/Singer/Songwriter Alan



Pedersen to our event where he will provide his heartfelt music as part of our program. Many of you are probably already familiar with Alan's music such as "Tonight I Hold This Candle" that we have used during our December Candle Lighting. Alan is traveling across the country in his Angels Across the USA Tour driving his van covered with butterfly decals displaying the names and hometowns of children being remembered. If you are interested, you will also have the opportunity to sponsor a butterfly decal in memory of your loved one. We know you will enjoy Alan's message of hope and his beautiful music so we urge you to attend. This will probably be the last Dove Release we will be having for the Topeka TCF Chapter as we research other special memorial events to use in the future.

There is a yellow RSVP form in this newsletter that gives more information about this 25th Annual Event. The form also offers you an opportunity to sponsor a dove in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling. The RSVP form needs to be returned **by September 22, 2018**, so don't delay in responding. Our



event will include a potluck luncheon, a memorial/music program, and the Dove Release itself. Please be aware



that this memorial event **takes the place** of our regular September support group meeting.

We hope you will join us!

A Word on our Photo Wall

I also wanted to remind you that we maintain a photo gallery of our beloved children, grandchild and siblings that is displayed at every meeting. If you would like your loved one represented, send in a 4 x 6 inch photo (vertical or horizontal presentation) along with their full name, their birth and death dates and your name. You can send these to me at my address on the front page of the newsletter. You may also request that your child's photo become a part of our annual Photo Tribute video that is shared at the December Memorial Candle Lighting Program.

Update on Dillons Community Rewards Program

The Topeka TCF Chapter recently received a check for \$152.88 from our participation in the Dillons Community Rewards Program during the last quarter. Did you know that you can help with our Chapter's funding needs by participating---it's easy to do. If you are a Dillons (Kroger) shopper and have a rewards swipe card to use when you check out with your groceries, you can designate the Topeka TCF Chapter as your charity of choice to receive a percentage of your total purchase price. It costs you nothing and does not affect your fuel points. There is more information on how to sign up on the facing page. Please note that our Chapter has been assigned a new ID number which you will use when you sign up. We currently have 24 families participating---just think how much we could earn if we had 100 families participating! Please consider signing up to help support our work with bereaved families.

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. We had no Love Gifts this period.

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

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

Saturday, September 29, 2018 - 25th Annual Memorial Picnic and Dove Release. Shelterhouse #3 at Lake Shawnee. Special guest speaker/musical performer Alan Pedersen. Please RSVP by September 22, 2018.

Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:

2019 ~ Philadelphia, PA - July 19-21, 2019
2020 ~ Atlanta, GA
2021 ~ Detroit, MI
2022 ~ Houston, TX

.....
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 Dillons Shopper's Card, every time you make a purchase at Dillons a portion of your total will be donated to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program **costs you nothing and does not affect your fuel points** for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select Option 3.
.....

Our Thanks to: Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite 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***

Olivia Lynn Anderson, daughter of Suzannah Anderson; sister of Eli Anderson who was born on October 11th

Jordan Robert Barranco, son of Juan and Elizabeth Barranco, who was born on October 30th

Brian Lynn Blecha, son of Lynn and Alice Blecha, who died on October 15th



Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, born on October 29th

Monty Brentlinger, son of Don and Carolyn Brentlinger, who died on October 21st

Skylar Callahan, son of Gena Callahan, brother of Branden, Alex, Chris and Jacob, who was born on November 4th and died on October 30th

Seth Austin Carney, son of Clay and Michelle Carney, who died on October 13th

Kale Cauthon, son of Denise Cauthon; brother of Josh and Cam, who died on October 15th

Kristi Diaz, daughter of Julie Diaz, born November 7th

Gerald (Jerry) Eberhardt, son of Duane and Mary Eberhardt, who died on October 25th

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, who was born on October 20th

Mitchell Hermreck, son of Dennis and Ann Hermreck; brother of Shelby and Raegan, who was born on October 14th

Jeffrey Hoium, son of Mel and Helen Hoium, who died on November 12th

Abigail Hosie, daughter of Matt and Jennifer Hosie, who was born on October 30th

Steve Isley, son of Web and Jeanette Isley, who died November 6th

Vernon A. Jamison, Sr., son of Eugene A. and Mayverdis Jamison who died on October 1st

Karen Kay Karnes, daughter of Wilson and Maxine Karnes, who died on November 19th

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who died on October 1st

Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who died on November 21st



Tabith Krystofosky, sister of Darrell "Bo" Cremer, Jr., who died on November 27th

Ben Lake, grandson of Patty Lake, who died on November 29th

Christen (Chris) Edward Locke, son of Alfonzo E. Locke Jr. and Sheila D. Locke, who was born on November 29th

Jessica Rae Meyer, daughter of James Robert Meyer and Jennifer Jean Meyer, and sister of Rebecca Meyer, who was born on October 27th; and died on November 16th



Kyle Neigh, son of Rosemary Robledo, who died on November 19th

Janet Pace, daughter of Barbara Hale, sister of Carla Gilbert and Sara Wallo, and mother of Shauna Andersen, born October 9th

Robin Lynn Paulson, daughter of Frank and Brenda Bissey and sister of Brad Bissey, born October 8th

Kiley Ramey, daughter of Gary and Linda Ramey, who died on November 24th

Adam J. Reams, son of Gene and Sandy Reams; brother of Nick Reams, who was born on November 24th

Sarah N. Rice, daughter of Gary and Peggy Rice, who died on October 6th

Brian Keith Robinson, son of Vernon and Pauline Robinson, who was born October 3rd; died October 13th

Luke Rojas, son of Wilma W. Rojas, born October 22nd; and died October on 29th

Abbey Rubottom, daughter of Darcey Evans, who was born on October 23rd

Patrick Sprowl, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sprowl, who was born October 18th



Jeffery Alan Steinbock, son of Joe and Anne Steinbock, who died on October 11th

Louis Walter and Teresa Caolina Stroble-Bernal, son and daughter of Raja Stroble and Beatriz Bernal, stillborn on November 1st

Jason R. VanDam, son of Will and Kay Hasty, died November 5th

Donald (Donnie) Warren, son of Nancy McCune, who was born on November 26th

Eric Edward Gordon Wiebler, son of David and Laura Wiebler, who was born on November 15th

Richard Wilson, son of Kathrine Susan Whittington, who died on November 10th

(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 October and November.)

September & A New School Year

To Most People School Means:

The kids out from underfoot, caps on,
Buying a new lunch box,
New clothes & the usual school supplies,
Fixing breakfast and trying to get it eaten,
Getting to a school bus on time.

What does school mean to a mother who has lost a child?

Watching other children filled with excitement.
A little boy who should be in kindergarten.
A brother who must go off to school by himself.
A teacher who must reach out to a class,
 when her little one won't be in school this year.
A mother sending two children off,
 when there should have been three.

Many tears, behind smiling faces!

~ Patsy Hedges, TCF, Frederick Co., MD

Pain

*is watching the little boy
your child played with last year
board the school bus
on his very first day of school.*

~ Barbara Augustine, TCF, Lancaster, PA

September

September brings such joy and such sorrow. I enjoy shopping with Travis for school clothes - even though each year it means all new jeans, shirts and shoes. What a joy! He has grown taller and it's a pleasure to watch him change from his first kindergarten days to this year's maturing fourth grader. And always, each year, I wonder about Jesse. When we're out shopping, and I see that certain shade of green, my heart skips a beat or two - how he would have loved that shirt! And I think of what a pleasure it would be to watch him change, too, from year to year.

And I wonder, would he think he was too old for a lunch box this year? (11 years) Would he want to buy his lunch? He never liked to buy it, he always wanted to take his own lunch pail, but, after all, he was six.

September.....full of joys and sorrows.....full of memories. Now they must last a lifetime. Always in my heart and mind, now and forever. Even though Jesse isn't with us, he's still our son, our child, a wonderful, precious joy; a gift from God, too soon gone Home!!

~ Kathy Barker, TCF, Sacramento, CA



(Use the form below to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter.)

.....
And We Remember - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in 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.

The Things I Have Learned About Grief Since the Death of My Child

*By Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom
Topeka TCF Chapter, Topeka, KS*

- Grief is not an event, it is a process. It does not have a distinct finish line. It takes each person a different amount of time to do their grief work—each person's journey is as unique as their fingerprints.
- Grief is unique for each person because of the relationship they had with the child who has died. That relationship was also unique. It is different for a father, different for a mother, different for a surviving sibling. Your grief journey will be guided by many things besides the relationship you had with the child who died. It will be influenced by your past life experiences (including previous losses); your religious beliefs, your socio-economic status, your physical health, the availability of a support network, and, in many cases, the cause of the death itself.
- People want you to be “over it” way sooner than you can ever imagine that as a remote possibility. They don't seem to understand that this is not the flu and we don't get “over it”, we learn to integrate it into the fabric of our lives. People want us to be back to our “old selves again” but what they don't realize is that we will never be the same people we were before our child died. One of our tasks as we make our grief journey is to redefine who we are in this new reality that we did not choose.
- Grief is not a predictable journey and sometimes feels as though we are on a roller coaster. One day we may feel somewhat stronger and feel we are making progress, the next day we may crash and burn. Grief is sometimes like winding a ball of yarn – you wind and wind on it and sometimes drop it and it unravels before you—then it is time to start winding it up again. Grief can be like that. It is unrealistic to think that things will be “normal” again because they won't be the “normal” we have always known. It will be part of our job to define our “new normal”—an existence without that child's physical presence.
- It is important to remember that as we grieve, we must also mourn the death of our child. The two words are usually used interchangeably, but they mean different things. Grief is on the inside—what we are feeling inside. Mourning is “grief gone public”—in other words how we are allowed to express our grief outside of ourselves. (These are Dr. Alan Wofelt's definitions of “grieving and mourning”)
- We have a great need to tell and retell our story far longer than many people are willing to listen to us. We need to find safe places to tell our story and continue to talk about our child. This is probably one of the greatest values of a TCF Chapter. Being part of a TCF Chapter also helps to validate what we are feeling and helps to make us feel less alone.
- Pain is part of the grief process and cannot be ignored or “gotten around” if we are to heal. You must integrate and process the pain to get to the other side of it – to the place where healing can start taking place. There is a Buddhist saying... “In order to heal, you have to lean into the pain.” While grief and pain are inevitable in most people's lives, misery is optional. I am sure you have heard the expression “we cannot change the wind, only the direction of our sails.”
- Remember that letting go of the pain does not mean letting go of the love you have for your child. That love will remain with you always. (I learned this from Dr. Darcie Sims and it was a turning point in my grief journey.)
- I think at some point each of us must make a conscious decision to heal. We must decide whether or not we want to become bitter or better. I believe each of us has the tools within us to heal, but we must listen to our inner voice to tell us how to proceed.

The Things I Have Learned (cont'd)

- Everyone seems to have an explanation for why this happened to you. It is a characteristic of our society that we want to be problem solvers, so people often feel they have to provide us with some kind of explanation. I haven't met a bereaved parent yet who felt there was a reasonable and acceptable explanation for why their child had to die.
- I also think we need to be selfish as we grieve. By this I mean we must be good to ourselves, be patient with ourselves, look to what we need to do to move forward. Sometimes we get so busy caring for and nurturing others, we neglect to nurture ourselves.
- We need to be open to the help others can provide. This is not a journey we need to make alone. Let people help you. Ask for help when you need it. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but an acknowledgement that you want to heal.
- Finally, I have come to understand that my daughter Rachael and the way she lived her life will continue to impact how I live my life and informs every important decision I make. Ultimately I hope to live my life in a way that would have made her proud that I was her mom. Perhaps that is the best way I can live her legacy.

Perspective Comes with Time

I never believed I would see another season
change with gladness.
I never believed I would see the world again
without the haze of tears.
I never expected to actually laugh again.
I never felt my smile would return and feel
natural on my face.
I never hoped for another day when I would
not want to die.
I never envisioned a world that could again
be bright and full of promise.
I believed all that had passed from me the
day he died and went away, never to return.
But I was wrong and I know in the fullness
of your grieving, you too will come to
understand that life goes on. . .that it
can still have meaning . . .that even joy
can touch your life once more.

~ Don Hackett, TCF
Hingham, MA



AUTUMN



What a strange time is autumn.
More than a season,
autumn is more like a mood.
Softness
and warmth
and abundance
drift from the sky like a smile

And you remember the seasons
before the children died.

They do seem far away sometimes,
those seasons, now.
But not the children --
they are always here
in this strange time, this autumn,
when the softness
and the warmth
and the abundance
of unseen children
drift from the sky like a smile.

~ Sacha Wagner

A Native American Lesson in Grief

By Trudy Weathersby

One of the most common questions that family and friends ask is how long does it take to “get over” the death of a loved one. Native American culture holds many lessons about grief and its duration. The Native American legend of the Caterpillar people holds lessons for us all in grief. This legend is traditionally told during funeral services of the Shoshone.

“Long ago, there were two caterpillar people who loved each other very much. When the caterpillar man died the caterpillar woman was overcome by her grief. In her remorse she withdrew into herself and pulled her sorrow around her like a shawl. She walked and mourned for a year and because the world is a circle she ended up where she had started. The Creator looked down upon her and told her that she had suffered too long. ‘Now,’ he told her, ‘is the time for you to step into a new world of beauty.’ He clapped his hands and the caterpillar woman burst forth as a butterfly. Her world was now full of beauty and color.” *



Many Native American tribes see the butterfly as a symbol of everlasting life. The Wilik-wilik waashaashut or the Butterfly Dance enacts this legend. Young women line up single file and pull their shawls over their heads to cover them. This represents the caterpillar in the cocoon. The drummers sing and drum sadly. After the head dancer returns where she began, the dancers open their arms and display the brightly colored shawls. The song becomes more upbeat and the women dance to represent the fluttering of the wings.

Another saying of the Warm Spring Native American tribe is to compare the death of a loved one to a landslide. “When your road is blocked by a landslide, you clear it by taking away one rock at a time.” In a time, when we want definite answers or a quick fix we should heed the wisdom these legends impart and let us work through grief at our own pace.

*Reference: Tafoya, Terry, “The Widow as Butterfly, Innovative Approaches for Bereavement Based on Native American Tradition,” The Director, February, 1998.

Trudy Weathersby, RN, M.Ed. is an active licensed Registered Nurse and counselor on Death and Dying

I Wonder

Your day began the usual way
in those early hours.
Were you aware of your mortality
that morning as you showered?
I wonder.

You were on the job, right on time,
like every other day.
Did you know before you got there
that you couldn't stay?
I wonder.

Did you hurry back to the house
for your gun and ammunition,
To open box and scattered shells
revealing your desperation?
I wonder.

Suffering the anguish, all along,
on the road to Indian Creek,
Did it take all of your courage
that appointment to keep?
I wonder.

With gun pressed to your flesh
did you speak a final prayer,
Asking God's forgiveness
because of the pain you couldn't bear?
I wonder.

Did you see us brokenhearted,
searching for you everywhere?
And what kept us from the scene
until others found you there?
I wonder.

In seeking for the many answers
to the questions I have asked,
Did I find some different answers
that brought me peace at last?
I wonder.

Knowing now, that love is stronger
than sickness, death and pain,
That faith, hope and love can heal,
bringing peace and joy again.
I wonder!

~ Lenora Sanders, TCF, Cassville, MO



To Sink or Swim

To sink or swim are often the only alternatives in life. Many survive - just by FLOATING. There are many times after my son died that I did feel as though I was sinking below the waves of grief and I was too exhausted to try and swim to the other side of the lake of pain.

It was at those times that I simply FLOATED. By floating, it may have taken me longer to reach the shore than it would if I had tried to swim; besides, the shore seemed just so far away that I wouldn't have made it by swimming anyway.

But by just floating along with the current, I did not sink and the other side is getting closer all the time.

~Verne Smith, TCF, Ft. Worth, TX

Season of Grief

The season of grief is our shutting down time. We prepare the cottage of our hearts for the winter, securing our windows to the world, stocking the cupboards with what will sustain us during the cold and dark. Carefully we rebuild our inner fire, and huddle in its warmth while the storms of winter pass, awaiting a spring that will come as surely as the steady passage of the days.

~ from *Safe Passages* by Molly Fumia

*Memory is a form of immortality
The people you remember continue to be
a part of your daily thoughts, and their
influence is with you always.*



The Tide Recedes

The tide recedes but leaves
behind bright seashells on
the sand . . .

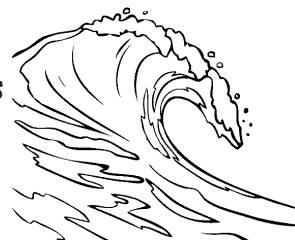
The sun goes down but
gentle warmth
still lingers on the land . . .

The music stops and yet,
echoes on a sweet refrain . . .

For every joy that passes,
something beautiful remains . . .

Dear sweet Kristina, even though
for now we are apart . . .

The beauty of you lives on,
in all of our hearts.



~ Lisa Comstock, Jeffersontown, KY

*Grief is the ceremony
of lost treasure.
Grief is the homage
you pay to the love
you were once blessed to share.
Grief is not an enemy.*

~ Sacha Wagner

*Memories, like a spider's web
shimmering in the sunlight,
capture experiences,
freeze them in time,
allow the re-living
of cherished moments
with our beloved children
absent from our hearths
but not our hearts.*

~ Pearl Mann, TCF, Louisville, KY

All I Feel Is Anger!

By Clara Hinton

When a teenager dies, often the circumstances of death have been accident related. Perhaps your child was driving way too fast, and had a fatal car accident after you warned him time and time again about speeding. Maybe alcohol was involved. You talked to your child, thought you got through, but your daughter went underage drinking and was a passenger in a car. Your daughter was the one who didn't make it out of the accident alive.

There are any numbers of accidental situations that can occur with teen deaths. Often, a parent's first response following shock is a very deep sense of anger. A parent will often replay the situation over and over again in the mind, growing angrier each time. "How could my child forget to use the seat belt? Those were the last words I said to him!" "She promised me she would stay away from that drinking party, and she lied!" "He knew the tires were bald, and yet he still chose to speed on the wet roads. He knew better!"

Grief and anger go hand in hand, yet there is a tremendous burden of guilt for the angry parent. If anger is vocalized, there is a feeling that we have somehow cheapened our child's life and have done harm to his memory. So, most often, a parent's anger is shoved under the rug where it festers and collects other grief emotions that will eventually complicate the grief.

What can a parent do when such unrelenting anger is felt toward the child who has died? The most obvious thing to do is to recognize and validate the fact that you are angry. Anger is a real emotion, and one that you will feel many times over during your walk through grief. There is no reason to feel burdened with guilt for feeling angry. Instead, accept the fact that anger is part of your grief, and know that it takes a lot of work to rid the anger that grief brings about.

Talk to a friend, your spouse, your pastor...someone who can lend you a listening ear. Tell that person why you are angry with your deceased child. You are now faced with an out of control situation, the death of your child, and you are feeling out of control with your escalating anger. Often, talking confidentially to a friend about why you are angry will help relieve a great deal of the building emotion of anger toward your child. What you are feeling is a normal reaction to a situation over which you had no control.

Probably the most healing exercise of all you can do is to write your child a letter. Tell your deceased child exactly why you are angry with him. "I loved you so much! I'm so angry with you for drinking and driving. You know we talked about that hundreds of times. And now you are gone. All I have is your memory. You've cheated me out of so much joy!"

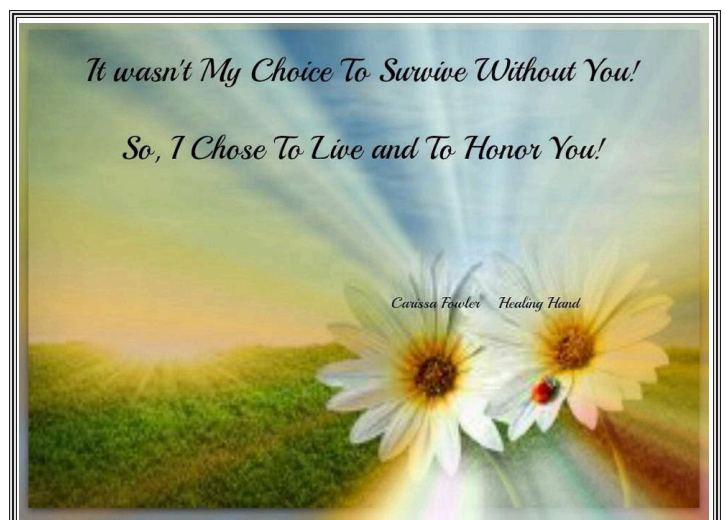
Sit at the gravesite, or some place that holds special meaning to you and your child, and read the entire letter aloud. Cry. Scream. Cry some more. Do whatever it takes to release the anger. Then, when you are finished, take the letter and burn it, bury it, or tear it up and float it down a river, watching it disappear before your eyes. As you do this, you will feel the beginning of your anger to subside.

By vocalizing your anger, you will be able to work through it and move on to more healing aspects of your grief work. By participating in a symbolic ridding yourself of anger, you will release a lot of your anger and guilt, allowing you then to focus on the positive memories of your child. This is one more step forward in the journey we call grief.

Source: <http://www.findingahealingplace.com>



September 10, 2018



The Compassionate Friends

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

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

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
AT TOPEKA, KS
PERMIT # 547

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

TCF CREDO

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

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

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

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

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

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