

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE

*For bereaved families and the people who care about them,
following the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild.*

Summer 2024



*The
Compassionate
Friends*
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Strong

*You're strong but you're not
You're sad but there's joy
You're hurt, angry, but hopeful
And 100 other emotions that only you know, and they can't be explained
No one can take them away for you, they belong to you now, like battle scars on a warrior*

*They can't feel your pain, they don't know it, they've never felt it, this is their first time too
so be patient with them, sometimes the people you know and love best
who love you are hurt and angry and sad as well
they may not say or do the right thing, and that's okay, they love you
they're right behind you ready to catch you*

*Your broken, he's broken, their broken
And you're the glue, the one they look to for reassurance, safety, and Love
You're Home to them, the one constant in life they can depend on
unconditional love, the wife, the Momma, the boo boo healer, and bedtime story reader
But who's your glue? Who is going to wipe away your tears and reassure you?*

*Your strong faith tells you that you will hold her again
That picture in your mind of running to her and holding her with laughter instead of tears
Your glue is strong, your glue has no expiration date, your glue is mighty, and it holds forever*

- Phyllis Dickens

Phyllis Dickens is the proud nanny of three beautiful grandchildren, one Angel and two sweet little humans. She wrote this for her daughter in the hopes that it would help her with her grief somehow. She thanks you for reading it, and hopes it touches your heart.

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Summer Memories and Traditions

Summer can be a challenging time for grieving families. Many family memories are made, and traditions are annually repeated during the longer and more relaxed days of summer. If a child, sibling, or grandchild who died was young, the memories may be ones of carefree activities such as annual summer camps, beaches and sand, or outdoor time hiking and playing. If the person who died was older, summer often holds loving memories of family vacations, cookouts, sports, or outdoor hobbies. While the joy of memories like these sustains those whose loss was longer ago, summer can be a more painful time to endure for those who have experienced a more recent death.

It can be confusing sometimes to hold the joy of our memories right alongside the pain and longing we experience as we create new rituals and memories without our loved one physically present. Our hearts are expansive to hold this duality of life experience. Yet we can be dropped to our knees with grief and have our breath taken away when a poignant reminder of their death, a difficult memory, or sometimes even a beautiful memory takes us by surprise. While these arduous moments become fewer as more seasons pass, they are unpredictable and are quite heartbreaking when they occur.

We hope that with more time, the intensity of the pain will lessen while the loving memories that fulfill us increase. Having meaningful seasonal markers can help provide more heartwarming feelings and fewer debilitatingly painful ones. Many of the writings in this issue speak to actively recounting our wonderful moments even as we continue to grieve. This helps us keep our loved one's life as present as their death and the delightful ways we lived with them as present as our experience of profound loss. May the writings in this issue help support your pain as you cherish your summer memories and deeply heartfelt connection to your child, grandchild, or sibling.

Warmly,
Shari O'Loughlin, MBA, CPC
CEO
The Compassionate Friends

The Dream

I woke last night dreaming of you.

There were tears flowing out of my eyes.

My heart was pounding, my breath was quickened.

I had seen you.

But you were just out of reach.

I tried to get near you.

But I could not move.

I could see your lips moving.

But I heard no voice.

I tried to speak, but there were no words

My beautiful April who left too soon:

Where are you?

What do you want?

How can I help?

Has the pain ended?

Are you finally at peace?

How I wish I had those answers.

Know you are missed.

Know you are loved.

- Eugene Rand

Share a sweet remembrance with your loved one from a summer's past.

When my grandson, Kevin, was 4, I took him surf fishing. Delaware's beaches are great. We drive on the beach, fish, eat, and play. Kevin drove me crazy that day! The bait was "Yucky", so I had to bait his line and cast it. My memories include his plastic sword stuck upside down in the rod holder, his tiny little beach chair, him eating licorice all day, and he was wearing my work hat.

Ken Love, Kevin's Grandpa

Courage and Resilience During Great Change

by Hilary Scott, Tyler's Mum



A good half of the art of living is resilience ~ Alain de Botton

Loss can happen in slow increments. You may be anticipating the time when life will change greatly if you have a loved one with a terminal illness. Loss can happen so suddenly that you remain in shock at its catastrophic occurrence far longer than you thought possible.

Over time, the impact and repercussions of a primary loss are known as secondary losses. This is something that is not generally acknowledged but almost always experienced.

Secondary losses can include the loss of companionship, the loss of income and financial security, and the loss of your home, employment, or business. The loss of familiarity, of feeling safe and secure. Your role will have changed, and along with it, a loss of identity as a spouse, parent, sibling, family member, friend, or caregiver.

If the loss is of your own health, it triggers many other losses: loss of mobility, control, functionality, and finances.

There is the loss of the milestones without your loved one, the family structure, and the hoped-for future together. There can be a loss of a sense of purpose, loss of memories, faith, and motivation. You can experience a change in your support systems: your friends, family, church, and social life.

You may lose your strength and energy to work and to pursue activities you once enjoyed. You may experience sadness because friends' distance themselves from you as you learn to navigate your changed life.

Many times, in life we do not acknowledge or take the time to grieve an event or loss that has happened to us in the past, for a variety of reasons. We are too busy and must keep our heads down and keep going. Or we are told that

it does not matter. What can happen at times of great loss is that the accumulated grief from all the unacknowledged loss over our lives collides with this primary loss and we are completely unprepared for the impact.

To mourn a loss, we must recognize and acknowledge it as such. We must acknowledge the importance and the validity of the ongoing secondary losses in our lives as we adapt, adjust, and change to learn how to live without our loved one in this new role.

We can be surprised by our grief, the depth of it, how long it lasts, how it demands to be heard and felt, and the physical and emotional consequences of not doing so.

Jill LaMoire from the *Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors* says, "the changes death brings are physical, personal, social, spiritual, emotional, and psychological. Death alters our environment to include a defined ending and the demand for a new beginning." She goes on to say that "family and friends also need to recognize secondary losses and the associated grief they bring. In wanting to see their loved ones happy and 'getting on with life,' they can

unwittingly deny or disenfranchise real feelings of grief. Awareness, patience, and understanding can help allow us to move through our grief."

Navigating our way after a profound loss takes a lot of courage. It takes resilience. When a difficult grief-inducing moment happens (and this moment can be as seemingly harmless as "How many children do you have?" or "Do you have any brothers or sisters?") and you are taken out by the wave of sadness and shock that these simple questions produce. When this happens, acknowledge the grief. Validate and give yourself permission to be sad. You are honoring

yourself, and the unique relationship you had with your loved one who died.

Carrying on, just simply carrying on, after your whole life has changed is courageous, brave, and resilient.

Hilary Scott is the mother to Jacob and Tyler. Tyler died in his sleep five days after his 18th birthday in October of 2013. For the past eight years, Hilary has been helping others cope with their unimaginable losses, which has in turn begun to heal her own broken heart. You can find her at www.healingtheloss.com

We can be surprised by our grief, the depth of it, how long it lasts, how it demands to be heard and felt, and the physical and emotional consequences of not doing so.

Share a sweet remembrance with your loved one from a summer's past.

In 2011, we took Jonathan's senior pictures with a professional photographer. Jonathan disliked photos and rarely smiled. To make him smile, I acted like a crazy fool behind the photographer, resulting in some funny shots. Even though I fell, it was worth it.

Erica Sivils, Jonathan's Mom



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Summer Days

by Millie Hunton, Chelsea's Mom

No one can really give us the comfort we crave that could only be achieved by getting our Chelsea back. There is nothing we want more than to hold Chelsea in our arms: to hug her, to kiss her, and to hear her sweet voice again. However, I found some solace in completing a project she started months before her passing.

On our inner yard fence, she had begun painting flowers on the fence boards adding color and décor to our backyard. Summer soon got hot, and we suggested giving it a break. But before she could resume the project, she had passed. Following the shock and turmoil of this horrible event, I had it in the back of my mind of returning to her project. But the thought of it would break me down in tears. I put it aside, but soon I continued to ponder it.

And finally, I built the courage, the courage to face the challenge of completing Chelsea's project. I gathered

paints, brushes, and sketches. I knew what I needed to do, but I knew it needed one thing that was not in the original plans. Besides the floral designs she had painted on the fence, it now called for butterflies! So, I got started. The first attempts were devastating; brush in hand, I would just look at the fence and start crying. So, I would have to pack it up. But I knew I wanted to do this more than anything to honor our Chelsea. I knew we could look at the finished project and reflect that this is what Chelsea would have done had she been here. So, I pushed on continuing the project with tears flowing from my eyes, and salty sweat burning my eyes so severely that I had to continually wipe them.

The heat was intense, the sun was beating on the back of my neck, but I was feeling accomplishment in the project. I couldn't stop. I just couldn't put the brushes down. Days passed, and those days turned to months, as I would add to it day after day. It was growing bigger and bigger,

covering the full-back fence and the side fence as well. The butterflies and flowers were blending together in a beautiful orchestration of harmony. I knew this little girl, and I knew how she would draw. Her expressions of art were flowing through me with such vibrance that I could feel her in every stroke. It was indeed a labor of love for the child I loved so much. I know she is looking at that fence. I know she was part of it. I think I have honored her in a way only I could. I love you, Chelsea.

There are many different ways of coping with the loss of a loved one, such as in memorial functions, lighting a candle,

reading books, writing letters or journals, or even planting a garden. All of these can be part of the healing process but never of forgetting the love of your deceased child.

Millie Hunton spent her career in Early Childhood Development while raising a family with William Hunton. They had two beautiful girls, Jessica, and Chelsea, both born in England and raised in Germany. After Chelsea's passing in 2016, William and Millie became active members of the Greater New Orleans Chapter, and then became Co-Chapter Leaders in 2019. Together they co-chaired the 47th TCF National Conference in New Orleans.



Share a sweet remembrance with your loved one from a summer's past.

Erin loved riding in our pontoon at the lake. Her favorite activity was throwing items overboard so I would have to maneuver the boat to retrieve the item with a fish net. As I tried to reach her sock, shoe, a towel or hat, she would begin laughing so hard she could soon hardly breathe. We all miss those days of her laughter in the sun.

David and Colleen Hines, Erin's Mom and Dad

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Let Me Tell You How He Lived

by Joie Law, Andrew's Mom

I get so tired of crying when I talk about my son. I want to get to that point where I am more at peace...that I can describe him and just smile. I do have those moments at home from time to time.

But not around people. Waiting for tires on my car last week, the lady beside me starts up a conversation. She tells a cute story about her grandkids. I smile. She asks me if I have grandkids. I'm never going to have grandkids...I think it, but don't say it out loud. I say no and look down. I wasn't prepared...I don't want to cry right now; I just want to get stupid tires on my car, and I'll probably never see this nice woman again, so why do I have to share? She sees that I am uncomfortable. She asks if I have children.

Damnit.

I used to brighten up at that question. Now I pray they won't ask. I'm not ashamed...I just don't want to cry AGAIN.

I respond with what I hope will stop more questions:

"I had a boy and a girl; they grew up and moved out, and I changed the locks so they can't move back." (with a convincing sarcastic smile). That's true...except for the lock part. I say it like I did when I was a brand-new empty nester...14 years ago. It was funny then... now it's my go-to answer in hopes there won't be more questions.

I've noticed people really don't want to listen...they just want to be listened to, and I'm good with that. I'm tired of crying, even though I fine-tuned my answer over the last eight years...

My son passed. It was an accidental overdose. My son was amazing, but he was poisoned by synthetic fentanyl and passed away. I miss him every day. My son, Andrew, lived to be 26. He was my mini-me, my favorite person.

I still can't type the "D" word next to his name. It just destroys me, so I use 'passed away'. I can handle that one better.

Tonight, I connected with my very dear best friend from childhood. We lost touch as young adults, for no particular reason. We found each other on Facebook tonight. I was so excited to get to talk with her. I genuinely wanted to hear everything about her life, her hubby, and her adult daughters that clearly inherited their mother's beautiful smile. She shared and I kept asking questions.

I referred to 'my kids' in general. I didn't say male, female, names, or ages. She didn't ask. I know she will. If I don't get brave and say it first, she will eventually ask.

By saying it first, I take control of the narrative...I still cry but I'm talking over the expected 'gasp', and then I continue talking over them as they are saying "Oh, my god, I'm so sorry," I still get choked up but it's not as bad if I say it first.

But tonight, I just felt relieved that she didn't ask, and I didn't get choked up. I know my Andrew understands. I don't feel guilt or shame...I just get tired of crying.

Some thoughtless people start asking more and more questions. When did he pass, where was I then, what drug was he addicted to; that makes me instantly angry. I feel like the car wreck that people slow down to see... it's not concern when they ask those specifics... it's so they can justify the event. Like trying to figure out what type of addict he was so they know whether to care or dismiss him! It's to help them decide if I was a bad parent simply based on his drug of choice!

I've had people ask me which drug he used, and my typical response is "It doesn't matter, he wasn't trying to die that night, he was poisoned." Yeh, but was it needles or alcohol or what? I finally decided that when I get one rude question like that then THEY are going to be subjected to what I WANT to share.

I get out my phone and go to the "Andrew" album where the first photo is my favorite, and show them his beautiful face and say, "Let me tell you how he lived."

"He was my person, we understood each other, same jokes, same movies and music. We even liked the same hair care stuff.

His face would light up when he saw a baby! He inherited that from me! He loved talking with the elderly. If I suddenly turned and he wasn't there, I would find him

talking to a "grandma or grandpa" asking questions about their life and laughing. I would tell him "Meet you here in 20". And many times, he would still be talking and listening in that same spot. What teenager does that, lol?

At his memorial, so many friends said the same thing:

- "If it weren't for Andrew, I wouldn't be in the band I'm in now."
- "He introduced me to all my friends."
- "I've never met a friend like him, he really listened whenever I was down."
- "I'm a better person because Andrew was my friend."

I try to remember that even extremely judgmental people are still learning and growing...

I know I've said some really stupid stuff in my life and sometimes people put me in my place. Maybe they will think twice the next time they judge a grieving parent. I swear I feel Andrew smile at me when I'm brave like that. He was my biggest fan and supporter.

I will probably always get choked up talking about my beloved son.

Ok. He's worth every tear I shed for the rest of my life. He's still my son and I'm still his Mommy. That will never change!

My relationship with Andrew is just that...MY relationship with MY Andrew. I never needed anyone else to qualify that before, so I don't need anyone to qualify it now. I don't need family members to reach out on his birthday or the day he passed. It would be nice...but I quit hoping for it...and I feel more peaceful letting go of that expectation.

Thank you for listening.

I truly don't think I could have survived without the parents here. You are my tribe and I value you. If I've shared something that rang true for you, then hold it. If it doesn't ring true for you, then let it go.

I do not grieve alone. I know we walk this path of grief together.

The youngest of seven, Joie was born on the West Coast. Her 'mini-me', her Andrew, was poisoned with synthetic fentanyl. She says that the parents she has met in TCF meetings and online remind her that she is not alone, that we walk this path of grief together.

Feeling Better: The Sibling Perspective

by Maggie Bauer, Christopher's Sister



I wish American society better acknowledged grief in general and that everyone inhabiting this Earth is on their own grief journey.

In April, I turned 40 and it was my second milestone birthday without my beloved big brother and only sibling, Chris. Family, old friends and new friends came to celebrate but there was still someone missing...and there always will be.

No one prepared me for the rollercoaster of emotions that I just couldn't seem to stop on my own. So, I did this difficult and scary thing, I asked for help. Help comes in many different forms. I participated in weekly and monthly local grief coalitions. I had grief-induced health problems which prompted me to work with a functional medicine doctor. Bloodwork was drawn to determine hormone and vitamin levels which needed adjustments. I had to alter my diet to gluten-free and dairy-free. It was not easy but, WOW, I felt better.

After a couple of failed tries, I found a good therapist who specialized in PTSD, EMDR, and brain spotting. We

worked together for 2.5 years. After every session, I felt drained and needed time to not feel so depleted. After rest and enjoyable activities, WOW, I felt better.

I also found the Minneapolis Chapter of The Compassionate Friends 15 months after Chris died. I was welcomed with open arms from the predominately parent group. They encouraged me to attend my first TCF national conference and, WOW, I finally found "my people"--other bereaved sibs--and there were over 500 of them all in one place!

Educating myself was another big reason I started to feel better, and, for me, education and advocacy went hand in hand.

I want people to know that the death of a loved one doesn't have to be a debilitating life sentence. Of course, there will hurt, sadness, and grief to name a few, and we will miss them for the rest of our lives. BUT the raw pain we felt early on doesn't have to last forever. Feeling better after the death of my brother has been the hardest work I've done in my life, but completely worth it. I can now often reflect on lots of different memories without them turning painful or

filling me with overwhelming sadness. My hope is that you too can find ways that make you keep feeling better.

(In honor of Christopher Daniel Bauer, who died by suicide August 22nd, 2012)

Maggie Bauer is Chris' little sister, who died by suicide in August of 2012. He was a loving brother and dearly missed. Along the grief and healing journey, Maggie became a certified grief recovery specialist and grief educator. She has been the sibling loss facilitator for the Minneapolis Chapter of Compassionate Friends for 8 years.

Share a sweet remembrance with your loved one from a summer's past.

My favorite all-time memory of my little brother was the first summer that we had an in-ground swimming pool with a slide. Dad told and yelled at all of the kids to go down the slide the correct way so we would not get hurt. Not Dennis; once dad turned his back for a second, here Dennis goes down on his belly, hands first! Not only that, Dennis went down backwards sitting up and attempted to walk down the slide! He lived up to his name!

Cindy Tart, Dennis' "Big Sisser"

TCF Sibling Zoom Meetings

SIB Suicide Support - Meets 4th Monday of the month at 9:00 pm ET

Meeting with Jordon - Meets Tuesdays at 7:00 pm ET

Grief Book Club - Meets 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm ET

Write Your Soul - Meets 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm ET

Meeting with Jason - Meets Thursdays at 7:00 pm ET

LGBTQ+ Sibs Meeting - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 9:30 pm ET

Canada Sibling Sharing Circle - Meets 2nd Saturday of the month at 1:00 pm ET

SIBS in Relationships and Partners - Meets 2nd Sunday of the month at 7:00 pm ET



To sign up for TCF SIBS newsletter, visit siblingisland.com or scan the QR code.



My Loved One Died and I'm Angry at Myself

*Excerpt from the book **Coping with Anger During Bereavement**
by Dr. Bob Baugher, Carol Hankins and Gary Hankins*

When people become angry following the death of a loved one (or, in some cases, prior to the death), there are a number of possible targets for their anger. One of them may be yourself. Here you are feeling bad enough each day as you cope with your grief and, on top of all this, you are angry at yourself. If this is you, continue reading.

We all have expectations of ourselves and when we fall short, we feel frustrated, angry, and perhaps guilty as well. Translated into self-talk, it can include words such as: I should, I must, I have to, I need to. When you are angry for things in the past, your words might be, I should've, I shouldn't have, why did (or didn't) I? During bereavement, it can sound like this: "I must be strong, I must do this right,

I shouldn't feel this way, I need to work harder, or, I have to accomplish this goal."

In addition to being angry at ourselves for not living up to expectations, we also might engage in hurtful self-actions in order to "pay ourselves back" for a perceived misdeed. Think about it: when you did something wrong when you were a child, you got punished. Now here you are as an adult continuing that pattern—except you're doing it to yourself! An example of this would be if you perceived that you might have contributed in some way to someone's death. It matters not whether you had anything whatsoever to do with the death. The important thing here is that you perceived you did or failed to do something. As you know, perception is everything.

Behaviors that people engage in to pay themselves back include self-hatred, neglect of health, self-punishment, deprivation of pleasure, and risk-taking. See if any of the following types of self-directed anger relate to you:

Self-hatred. If you feel any responsibility for your loved one's death, you may have made some of the following statements to yourself: "I'm a bad person." "I hate myself." "How could I have done that (or failed to do it)?" "Everyone would be better off if I were dead."

Neglect of health. People who hate themselves may say things such as:

- Why do anything for myself?
- I don't deserve it.
- Why go to the doctor?
- If I become (more) ill, so what? I deserve it.
- If I don't feel like eating, why force it? I'm not worth it.

This may be one of the reasons that bereaved people tend to have more health problems. Sometimes they feel that they do not have the "right" to take care of themselves. As a result of their lack of preventive self-care, they develop health problems.

Self-Punishment. Stemming from self-hatred, self-punishment behaviors include such physical actions toward oneself as hitting, slapping, cutting, biting, scratching, and butting one's head.

Deprivation of pleasure. Self-hatred can also take the form of depriving oneself of engaging in activities that formerly resulted in feelings of pleasure. Examples include depriving oneself of going out with friends, going to a movie, a sports event, or a dinner, laughing, engaging in sexual relations, participating in recreational activities, or taking a vacation.

Risk-taking. Some people react to a loved one's death by feeling that life is not worth living and begin to take risks that they would not ordinarily take. Their self-talk may go something like this: "So what if I die or get hurt--it doesn't really matter." Examples of risk-taking are reckless driving, experimenting with addictive drugs, unprotected sex with multiple partners, and trying dangerous activities without guidance (e.g., mountain climbing or hang-gliding).

Let's look next at what you can do to work on your self-anger. These suggestions come from people who have been through their own self-anger:

1. Ask yourself the following question: How much more punishment should I continue to give myself? How much punishment is enough?
2. If my deceased loved one could suddenly appear, what would he or she say about how I've been hurting myself? In other words, now when I begin to treat myself in a negative fashion, I need to say, "What would _____ say right now?"
3. Can I begin to change the negative words I've been saying to myself? For example, can I stop calling myself the following negative things, (fill in) _____, _____, _____.
4. In what kind of positive ways can I give myself permission to take care of myself?
5. With whom can I begin to share my thoughts of anger toward myself? As you are aware, keeping a secret of these negative actions toward yourself will prolong the pain. This is what you wish to do right now in your life: continue giving yourself more pain to "atone for your sins." However, I ask you again: How much self-punishment is enough? It follows that, when you share your secretive self-punishing actions with one or more caring people, it becomes the first step toward letting go of some of your self-anger. As you finish this article, are you going to tell someone or will you get up, walk away, and continue to beat yourself up?

I wish you the best as you make this important decision and I would guess that, if your deceased loved one is looking down on you, he or she is also wishing you the best. Don't you agree?

Regards,
Dr. Bob

Dr. Bob Baugher is a psychologist and certified death educator who teaches at Highline College in Des Moines, WA. He is the professional adviser for the South King County Chapter of TCF. Bob is the author of grief-related books and several articles on coping with bereavement. For the past 25 years, he has been invited to present workshops at most TCF national conferences.



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Crying in the Freezer

by Leanne Peterson, Brian's Mom

During the process of prepping Brian's house for sale, I needed to clean out his refrigerator and freezer.

The refrigerator food had all been tossed in January, but the freezer had not been touched. I had looked in it but left it as is.

As I began to clean and toss, the tears fell. Tears falling is a frequent occurrence in my life, but I was struck by the oddity of having my head in the freezer and crying.

His freezer contents reflected his love of Girl Scouts Thin Mint cookies. Since he died in December, I know these cookies were from past years. Brian always felt that if a Girl Scout asked him to buy cookies, he should say yes. Food allergies restricted his choices, but these were "safe" for him.

He will never eat them. Brian will never eat his Thin Mint cookies. Brian will never cook that frozen pizza. He will never use that bag of frozen rhubarb from the garden to bake a cake, or open the jar of homemade horseradish, or

polish off that 5 lb. bag of Jolly Ranchers. The package of ground venison goes untouched and unopened. My boy is gone.

Of course, I know he is dead. I knew it before I stood crying in the freezer. Yet, seeing the things he loved, the things he planned to eat, hurts. Hurts to the core of my being.

So, I grab a tissue, wipe my nose and my eyes, and close the freezer door, leaving his Thin Mints until another time.

Be kind to others, love the moments you have, and hug those you love.

Leanne Peterson is a long-time teacher. She and her husband lost their son, Brian, on December 20, 2022, at the age of 29. It was unexpected. When Brian didn't show up for work or answer calls, his boss called for a wellness check. The police found him deceased on his couch. An autopsy showed cardiomegaly – the cause of it unknown. Since then, his parents have emptied his house, listed it, and closed on the sale. Their hearts have a forever hole.

My Grief These Days: 11 Years Out

by Jenny Robbins, Kade's Mom



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I am a bereaved mom, grief and trauma counselor. Here is what 11-years out is like for me.

There is somewhat of a cushion of time, peace, and softness versus what used to be stark, constant, and exhausting. Driving by places we used to go, birthdays, you name it; everything was synonymous with pain.

My "somewhat of a cushion" today did not automatically come with the rolling by of 11 years. I added feathers to my cushion. Feathers like going to a grief group. Meeting with my grief therapist. Feeling a feeling. Getting myself to a grief retreat. Googling a healing art day. Filling a journal page. Reading a grief book. Allowing what needed to be allowed. And later...my feathers were stepping into leadership in a grief group. Becoming certified in traumatic grief care. Creating an expressive grief workshop. Talking to newer therapists about grief therapy. Sharing with *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

You might think that at 11-years out, holding my feathery cushion, I don't think of Kade every day. That would be wrong. My cushion should not be mistaken for a buffer. Kade, and the loss of him, has settled in my bones and my being.

At 11-years out, the acuteness has changed (mostly—his last birthday was a walking-through-Jello day—a trip to the outskirts of Early Grief Town. And I'm OK with that).

I lay my head on my feathery-filled cushion of grief, that I've decided is covered in flannel. I hug it to me. And...I add to it.

Jenny Robbins, MA, LPC, CBC is mom to Kade, a Colorado mountain boy who died at age 19 in 2012, and Asher, a very musical middle schooler. She has found great fulfillment as a grief and trauma counselor since 2018. Jenny, her husband Brian, and Asher live in the Denver area and are amused and comforted daily by their two cats, Florence and Vivaldi.



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No Chance Encounters

by Sylvia Bosma, Kaitlyn's Mom

There are no chance encounters at Publix here, at least not with anyone that would have known my daughter. I am nearly 800 miles from Nashville, and nobody in this new town knows her.

Yes, after nearly seven years of her being gone I have finally started to feel like I am home and I have made friends. Yes, her little brother has found his place in this amazing school. He is building his own community, making friends of his own.

And yet, there is no one here that remembers KK, no one who knew her. They may know of her, having heard my story, having seen her photo on my desk at work. But anyone walking this path knows how hard it is to talk about our child that died, especially when that someone is a stranger making casual conversation in the checkout lane.

Perhaps some years from now words will flow more easily, when the scab of my loss will not be as fresh, will not loosen and bleed as quickly. Perhaps by then I will be able

to get past the uncomfortable silence following the words “my daughter died”, that look in their eyes as they begin to consider their nearest escape down the freezer aisle. Perhaps I will be able to get past the initial awkwardness of our stilted conversation and tell them about her favorite cereal that she would eat without milk, or her enormous sweet tooth. By then I may not even tear up anymore.

Until then I will try my best and talk about her when it feels natural, when the right time presents itself. While it may not be a chance encounter, it could be a chance, an opportunity to mention her name. It might be at work, discussing costumes for Halloween, and I can gush about all the costumes she would design herself. Or it might be at the dentist, when the hygienist asks me about my horseshoe tattoo and I tell her about her love of horses.

Who knows, it might even be at Publix, in the deli department as I wait in line. I might point to the Mac ‘n Cheese, and tell the person behind me that it was my

daughter's most favorite food ever. I would tell them she died, that her name is Kaitlyn, and that I miss her beyond measure. Then I would tell them that every time I see Mac ‘n Cheese I smile, because it reminds me of her.

Sylvia Bosma is the mother of three. Her only daughter, Kaitlyn - KK - Cook, died by suicide in 2017, when she was 14 years old. Sylvia got through the

initial months of crushing grief by caring for her youngest son, who has Down syndrome. Finding her community; support groups such as The Compassionate Friends; counseling; time in nature; and words - books, podcasts, journaling, storytelling - are what has helped her get to where she can offer hope to those early in their grief. Sylvia lives in Tampa, Florida with her family, the search for her new identity - and purpose - a work in progress.

Share a sweet remembrance with your loved one from a summer's past.

When Amanda was in 5th grade she decided that the Reservoir Park needed to be cleaned up. She spoke to the president of a local bank to provide juice and cookies, to the manager of a retail store to provide a boy's and girl's bicycle for the efforts of the clean up, and also contacted the parks and recreation director to provide the trash bags. The park was cleaned up and she felt good about the effort of the 5th graders and others that came out to help.

Sarita Cunningham, Amanda Jo's Mom

© Andrey&Anna/stock.adobe.com

Share a sweet remembrance with your loved one from a summer's past.

My son, Yoito, gave me many sweet, memorable and funny moments. However, for his after-high school graduation they held a very nice celebration at a local hotel and the dress code required a tuxedo. At the tuxedo store, he modeled the pants shirtless and the sales girls loved it. I was embarrassed, but also loved it because with his dark hair, green eyes and funny personality, we all enjoyed that moment.

Nivia Vázquez, Yoito's Mom

© JAKKAPAN JABAINAI/stock

Timeless Words: Articles from the Archives

Summertime

by Sascha Wagner, Nino and Eve's Mom



It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when

there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief

of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.

Born in Germany, Sascha Wagner immigrated to the United States in 1947. Tragically, her son, Nino, drowned, and 15 years later on the anniversary of his death, Sascha's daughter, Eve, died by suicide; Nino and Eve were her only children. The poetry she wrote following their deaths was beloved by bereaved families because it was written simply and straight from the heart of another bereaved parent. Her articles and poetry were used extensively in *The Compassionate Friends'* (TCF) chapter newsletters. Sascha wrote several small books of poetry. After she died in 2003, her estate awarded TCF the copyrights for Sascha's writing.

Connect with Other Bereaved Parents, Grandparents, and Siblings Every Day on TCF's Online Support Community

The Compassionate Friends offers virtual support through an Online Support Community (live typed chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling.

MONDAY

10 AM EST | 9 AM CST | 8 AM MST | 7 AM PST
(open depending on moderator availability)
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

10 PM EST | 9 PM CST | 8 PM MST | 7 PM PST
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

TUESDAY

8 PM EST | 7 PM CST | 6 PM MST | 5 PM PST
Loss to Substance Related Causes

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Bereaved Less than Three Years

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Bereaved More than Three Years

WEDNESDAY

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

THURSDAY

8 PM EST | 7 PM CST | 6 PM MST | 5 PM PST
No Surviving Children

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Bereaved Siblings

FRIDAY

10 AM EST | 9 AM CST | 8 AM MST | 7 AM PST
(open depending on moderator availability)
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SATURDAY

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SUNDAY

8 PM EST | 7 PM CST | 6 PM MST | 5 PM PST
Suicide Loss

8 PM EST | 7 PM CST | 6 PM MST | 5 PM PST
Pregnancy/Infant Loss

9 PM EST | 8 PM CST | 7 PM MST | 6 PM PST
Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

Visit www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support/ for more information and to register.

The Compassionate Friends Private Facebook Groups

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages were established to encourage connection and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling.

TCF – Loss of a Child

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofachild

TCF – Loss of a Stepchild

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofastepchild

TCF – Loss of a Grandchild

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofagrandchild

TCF – SIBS (for bereaved siblings)

facebook.com/groups/tcfsibs

TCF – Bereaved LGBTQ Parents With Loss of a Child

facebook.com/groups/tcflgbtqlossofachild

TCF – Multiple Losses

facebook.com/groups/tcfmultiplelosses

TCF – Men in Grief

facebook.com/groups/tcfmeningrief

TCF – Daughterless Mothers

facebook.com/groups/tcddaughterlessmothers

TCF – Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren

facebook.com/groups/tcfgrandparentsraisinggc

TCF – Sudden Death

facebook.com/groups/tcfsuddendeadth

TCF – Loss To Substance Related Causes

facebook.com/groups/tcflossstosrc

TCF – Sibling Loss To Substance Related Causes

facebook.com/groups/tcfsiblinglossstosrc

TCF – Loss to Suicide

facebook.com/groups/tcflossstosuicide

TCF - Loss to Homicide

facebook.com/groups/tcflossstohomicide

TCF - Loss to Domestic Violence

facebook.com/groups/losstodomesticviolence

TCF – Loss of a Child With Special Needs

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofchildwithspecialneeds

TCF – Loss to Long-Term Illness

facebook.com/groups/tcflosstolongtermillness

TCF – Loss to Mental Illness

facebook.com/groups/tcflosstomentalillness

TCF – Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver

facebook.com/groups/tcfdrunkipaireddriver

TCF – Loss of a Medically Complex Child

facebook.com/groups/lossofamedicallycomplexchild

TCF – Loss Due to Drowning

facebook.com/groups/tcflosstodrowning

TCF - Loss to COVID-19 or Other Infectious Diseases

facebook.com/groups/tcflossstocovid19

TCF – Loss to Cancer

facebook.com/groups/tcflossstocancer

TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth

facebook.com/groups/tcflossstomiscarriagestillbirth

TCF – Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Loss of an Infant Grandchild

facebook.com/groups/miscarriagestillbirthinfantgrandchild

TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss

facebook.com/groups/tcfinfantandtoddlerloss

TCF - Loss of a Child 4 - 12 Years Old

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofchild4to12

TCF – Loss of a Child 13-19 Years Old

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofchild13to19

TCF – Loss of an Adult Child

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofanadultchild

TCF – Loss of Your Only Child/All Your Children

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofonlychildallchildren

TCF - Loss of an LGBTQ+ Child

facebook.com/groups/tcflossofanlgbtqchild

TCF – Grieving the Loss of a Child as a Single Parent

facebook.com/groups/lossofachildasasingleparent

TCF – Bereaved Parents With Grandchild Visitation Issues

facebook.com/groups/tcfgrandchildvisitation

TCF – Inclusion and Diversity

facebook.com/groups/tcfinclusionanddiversity

TCF – Grieving with Faith and Hope

facebook.com/groups/grievingwithfaithandhope

TCF – Secular Support

facebook.com/groups/tcfsecularsupport

TCF – Finding Hope for Parents Through TCF SIBS

facebook.com/groups/tcffindinghopeforparents

TCF – Reading Your Way Through Grief

facebook.com/groups/tcfreadingthroughgrief

TCF – Crafty Corner

facebook.com/groups/tcfcraftycorner

The Compassionate Friends Chapter Leadership (for anyone currently serving on a Chapter steering committee)

www.facebook.com/groups/tcfchapterleadership/

TCF STAFF

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Chief Executive Officer

Brenda Busby

Director of Operations and Volunteers

Sara Zeigler

Communications Coordinator

Rochelle Reduta

Administrative Assistant

Kathie Kelly

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St. Mary’s, GA

Correspondence for The Compassionate Friends should be sent to:

The Compassionate Friends

48660 Pontiac Trail #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

877.969.0010

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE

To have material considered for publication, send to: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

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The Compassionate Friends

Worldwide Candle Lighting

Join us on December 8, 2024

... that their light may always shine."

The Compassionate Friends annual Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon. The Worldwide Candle Lighting creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone.



We are excited to announce the dates for

Our 48th National Conference

July 11-13, 2025 in Bellevue, WA