



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September-October 2024

Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips

24-Hour Help Line: (816)229-2640

Private Facebook Page: Eastern Jackson County TCF

Website: www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org

TCF National Headquarters

48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

(877)969-0010



Our Annual Walk to Remember

will be held September 21, 2024
At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass
Pro) In Independence, MO
Registration will begin at 8:30 am
Walk will begin at 9 am
For more information, please go to
our website:

www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org.

When I Am Gone

When I am gone, do not fear my
memory.

Do not be afraid to speak my name
or look through old photographs.

Do not be scared to play old videos
so that you might hear my voice and
see me laughing.

Do not be wary of visiting my
favorite places or eating my favorite
foods or singing along to my favorite
songs.

I know it will hurt. Those memories
will remind you that I am gone.

They will stab at you like a knife in
an open, gaping wound. Raw,
excruciating pain.

But after a while the knife will
become less sharp, the wound will
become less open and the pain will
become less raw.

And those memories will remind you
that I was here.

That I lived.

Do not reduce my life to my death.

Speak my name, hear my voice, sing
my favorite songs and visit my
favorite places.

Because that's how I can stay alive a
little.

Right here with you ♥

Becky Hemsley 2022
from 'When I Am Gone' is from the
book of the same name
<https://a.co/d/8R8rlinh>



Love After Loss

Love doesn't end with goodbye;
It lingers in the spaces
Between each breath,
In the quiet moments of
remembering
All that was, and all that still is.

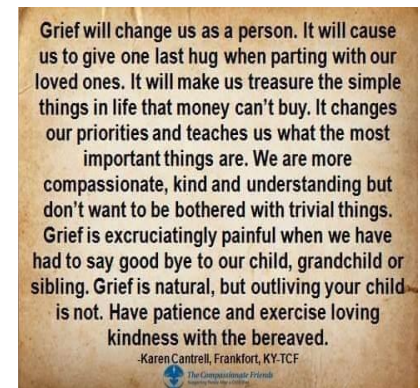
I feel it in the morning light,
In the way it kisses my face
Through an open window,
A tender reminder that love
Knows no boundaries, no final door.

It lives in the small things—
A familiar song, a scent of
sandalwood,
The way the wind moves through the
trees
As if whispering your name
Into the depths of my soul.

Though loss has drawn its line,
Love crosses over,
And I find you in places
Grief can't reach,
In every memory that holds us close.

Love after loss is different,
But it is no less real.
It is the promise of what was,
A flame that keeps on burning,
Even in the darkest night.

--Ann Marie



Autumn

*In the fall when amber leaves are
shed,
Softly...silently, like tears that
wait to flow,
I watch and grieve.*





I Dreamed I Saw Alex

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was a tiny curious round-headed toddler with jam on his face who loved me totally and asked if he could sit with me. I said "Yes... but let's wipe your face."

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was a tiny round-headed toddler with a furrowed brow, about to have a tantrum.

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was 7 or 10 or 12 or 24 or 32. He wondered if I wanted to have a catch.

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was walking down Caroline Street, from the bus stop to his mom's house. As I approached by car from behind, I thought "that kid looks like Alex will look when he's grown up." And, as I got closer, I realized that it was Alex. I tooted the horn and waved as I passed him. He looked up, caught my eye, and gave a cool adolescent "what's up" nod.

I dreamed that I got a call from Alex, from Florida. "I'm in a bagel shop with my friends," he said, "and I am trying to remember that story about when we met Martin Brodeur."

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was 11 and he was riding his razor scooter up the street as we made our way to Watchung Plaza for a slice of pizza. I called out: "look both ways before you cross." And then he crossed without looking and shouted back "I'm good!"

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was young and happy and confident and open and eager for whatever might come next. I was relieved and proud of him and happy for him. I can't wait, I thought, to see what comes next.

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was a 40-year-old man, across the table, looking me dead in the eye, describing the state of his mind, body and spirit when he was at the bottom of that terrible period of addiction. He was sharing with me

what really went on, what it all really meant, how he got out of it, and how he'd moved forward. And he thanked me for helping him to save his life.

I dreamed that I saw Alex. I was propped up in my bed, old and unwell. Alex was there to take care of me. He was there to give me a chance to tell him what it all had meant, what I hoped he'd remember. He made a joke about investing all of my money in a sneaker shop. (I wasn't sure he was joking.) He sat by my bed and asked if there was anything I needed.

I dreamed I saw Alex. He was a crying baby who couldn't sleep, and I didn't know what he needed. I wondered if he knew what he needed.

I dreamed I saw Alex. He was a baby, wide awake at 5:15 am, on my lap, on our couch on Myrtle Street. We were watching a taped episode of "Twin Peaks." I wondered if the weird violent vibe of "Twin Peaks" was bad for him somehow. I wondered if "Twin Peaks" might give him a healthy sense that things and people are full of strange surprises. I wondered if he'd fall back asleep soon.

I dreamed that I saw Alex. We were at the Brendan Byrne Arena in Rutherford, NJ. The Nets vs. the Timberwolves. Two terrible teams. The clumsy, ineffective Jason Collins threw down a dunk. "You can't stop Jason Collins," Alex said in his spot-on sportscaster voice, "you can only hope to contain him!" In my dream, I laughed, and Alex laughed too.

I dreamed that I saw Alex. He was a tiny baby. As I entered his room on this very early morning, he lit up with the biggest, most heart-breaking baby smile. He squealed with delight. A beautiful boy with a million years of adventure and joy ahead. I smiled too. I grabbed him and lifted him, and his smile somehow got wider, and so did mine. I held him and said: "Today is going to be easy. Today, I'm going to take care of you. And tomorrow too." He smiled wider still.

I dreamed I saw Alex. He was pacing up and down Grove Street in his down jacket and woolen hat smoking a cigarette and typing texts and jokes and bits and ideas into his phone. He sauntered south, with his slow

smoking-a-cigarette gait, past our driveway and then past our neighbor Gautam's house and then – now obscured by Gautam's hedges – to the corner and, I presumed, down Harvard Street. Having a smoke and killing time. I sat on our front porch waiting with half of my attention for Alex to make his turn, and reappear, heading north toward our house. Back home.

But Alex didn't appear, and Alex didn't appear. I lifted myself out of my chair, walked to the door and then up the walk to Grove Street. No sign of Alex. I followed Alex's path past Gautam's house to the corner. I looked left, down Harvard Street. No sign of Alex. I looked over my shoulder and then further down Grove Street and then, again, down Harvard Street. There was no sign of Alex.

Alex, it seemed, somehow, was gone. I asked a neighbor, out walking her dog, if she'd seen Alex. "No," she said, "not for a long time. Not since last summer. Or maybe longer." "Weird," I said, "I just saw him. I just saw him walk by. I was just waiting for him to come home." In my dream, my heart sank. I was on the verge of saying: "This makes no sense. He was just here!" I knew that I was right, but I also knew it was futile.

Alex was gone. In my dream, I gasped and I gasped and I said: "Alex is gone."

And I thought "what do I do now?" And then I thought: "Wait. This is a dream." But then I didn't wake up. In my dream, I fell to my knees. And then I gathered myself. I returned to my seat on the porch. And I waited.

Written by Tim Koechlin published in Centering and Grief Digest Magazine.



In the Quiet of Absence

In the quiet of absence, a silence
takes hold,
Where laughter once danced, now a
stillness unfolds.
Empty chairs speak volumes, their
echoes now still,
A room once so lively, now bound by
a chill.

The echoes of footsteps, the warmth
of a voice,
Lost in the shadow, the remnants of
choice.
Each breath that was shared, now an
echo of pain,
In the spaces where memories and
silence remain.

A heart once so full now feels hollow
and bare,
The weight of their absence, a
burden to bear.
Waiting for whispers that never will
come,
Living in stillness where love used to
hum.

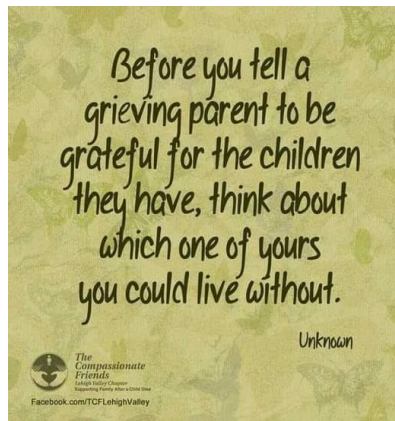
The stone in the chest, heavy and
cold,
An ache for the days when their
stories were told.
Wondering if time will restore what
was lost,
Or if forever we'll carry the silence
embossed.

In the quiet of absence, where
echoes have flown,
We find ourselves searching for what
we had known.
Forever a piece of us will remain
incomplete,
In the silence of absence, where past
and present meet.

--Ann Marie

"Time passes and I am still not through it.
Grief isn't something you get over. You
live with it. You go on, on with it lodged in
you. Sometimes I feel like I have
swallowed a pile of stones. Grief makes
me heavy. It makes me slow.

Even on days when I laugh a lot, or dance,
or finish a project, or meet a deadline, or
celebrate, or make love, it is there.
Lodged deep inside of me."
— Ann Hood



Artwork by Lilymoon

Quietly

I missed you quietly today. So
quietly that no one noticed.

I missed you as I climbed out of bed
and as I brushed my teeth; when I
waited at the lights on the drive into
work and as I heard the rain outside
my window.

I missed you as I ordered lunch and
as I kicked off my shoes when I got
home; as I switched off the lights
and climbed into bed for the night.

I missed you without tears or noise
or fanfare.
But oh how I felt it.

I felt it in the morning, at lunchtime,
in the evening and at night. I felt it as
I woke, as I waited, as I worked. I
felt it at home, on the road, in the
light, in the dark, in the rain.

I felt it in every one of those
moments, each one sitting heavier
and heavier as the weight of me
missing you kept growing and
growing.

Yes, I missed you so quietly today.
But I felt it so loudly.

by Becky Hemsley 2024

Forever

Forever
is a long time
to miss someone

Especially when
their absence leaves
such a lasting mark
on your heart

They say time
heals all wounds

But some absences
create such deep scars
in our hearts, that
time moving forward
only seems to
deepen our longing

Yet in this ache
there is comfort in
the small things ~
old pictures,
a familiar scent,
a song ...
a connection that
existed on earth and
now in Heaven

To miss someone forever
is to keep a part of them
alive within us ,
to hold onto who they were
and what they meant to us

As life moves forward
you learn to carry
them with you,
not only in your thoughts
but in who you are

And so life goes on
New memories are made ~

Yet that special
place in your heart
always remains theirs

Forever is a long time,
but it also a testament
to the ever lasting
power of love

Until we meet again

by Helen Lapierre
Hello to Heaven

Cleaning the Closets

Cleaning the closets and drawers after someone dies is one of the hardest things to do. Some people leave it for weeks, months, or years because they just can't bring themselves to do it yet... and others move everything right away because they can't bear to look at it. I get both of these responses. Neither is wrong or right and much like grief in general, we need to allow them to do this on their terms, when they are ready and how they feel best to process it. Our role is simply to be there for them if they need us.

These are a few tips that I recently offered a parent who was really struggling with this process.

1. Tackle one drawer/ section of the closet at a time. Don't rush through it. Take your time and go through each item and really savor the memories if you can. And don't give anything away too quickly.
2. Ask friends and family if they would like anything. Some people will find comfort wearing a hat, shirt or sweater that belonged to someone they love. I still have a sweater that was my dad's and although I do not wear it often, I love that I have it.
3. Create three piles; save, gift and donate. Once you have this organized it will make things a little easier for you. And don't hesitate to ask a friend to drop the donations box off for you, it is one less thing you have to do, and it allows your friends to be helpful... which most want to be.
4. If you can't bear to let go of the collection of concert or sports t-shirts, favorite sweaters or jackets, or even the 152 business ties... find someone who can sew and ask them to make a quilt. It is a lovely thing to have, and it keeps their things close to you in a way that can be comforting and help you work through your grief.
5. For the little trinkets, the jewelry, the special things that meant a lot to them... find a box, a special box that you pick out especially for this... and place each item in there for safe

keeping... and open it any time you want to. xo

The most important thing that I think you should remember is that this is never something you have to do right away. Take your time and do not hesitate to ask a friend or family member to help you... we get how hard this will be for you, and we want to help you in any way that we can... you don't have to do these things alone. But... if you want to, if you need to... we respect that too.

♥ Gabby

<https://www.thehospiceheart.net/post/one-drawer-at-a-time>



Don't be sad... we will meet again. Open your little eyes, maybe you can't see me but, in your dreams, you can find me.

Don't cling to the idea that I should continue by your side, everything has a beginning and an end, but I promise you that I will continue in your memory.

When you can't find me in your dreams, don't wake up with

discouragement or anger, I went to take refuge in your heart.

There will be days that will fly by and that's okay, it's not necessarily so that you forget me, it's so that your wound heals sooner.

Life has not been unfair or cruel, life with all its good and bad things, is beautiful, very beautiful.

No matter where each of us is now, our hearts will continue to connect.

Don't cry for me, please, I'm very well, in a state of deep tranquility, with a peace that I couldn't explain to you but that makes me feel happy, your tears will not bring me back, don't torture yourself anymore, don't think that It could have been different because that doesn't make a difference, if I have accepted it, accept it too and move on.

Never think about giving up, be strong, don't give up, you can, you have always been able to and you always will be able to.

We can't touch each other but we can still feel each other. The magic is not over if you continue to remember me and carry me in your heart.

Live for you, for me, for whoever you want but live, enjoy this beautiful life that God gave us today we are here and tomorrow maybe not.

Seek your happiness in those precious little gifts that life gives us; the light of the moon, the wind, the rain, the flight of a bird, the beauty of the landscapes.


Live and I will continue to live through you. And when you can't feel me by your side, when I no longer appear in your dreams, in those small gifts that we almost never value, you will find me, I promise that I will give you a sign.

Breathe, flow, move forward, you can! You have always been able to and you always can.

From Many Phases and Faces of A Mother's Grief Facebook Page



it's true that crying won't solve things....

but we don't cry to solve.
we cry to release the pain deep inside
our heart 

--The Pain! by Pinterest

Today I sat with grief.
There was no one else around.
I thought it would go away
if I didn't make a sound.

But it remained beside me.
I tried to turn away.
I found it turned with me,
like a game I used to play.

This wasn't any game though,
so I moved to another place.
Grief was already waiting
with its tear stricken face.

I asked what it wanted
and why wouldn't it go away.
Grief didn't answer, but
I knew it was here to stay.

So I let it sit beside me.
I stopped asking it to go.
Instead I opened up to it
and put my emotions all on show.

It never asked any questions.
Or expected me to smile.
It never questioned time,
Or said it had been a while.

Grief moved into my home.
It slept with me in bed.
It ate when I would eat.
It heard everything I said.

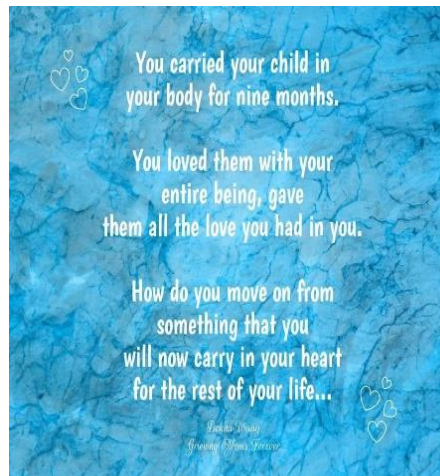
I thought when it was ready
that maybe it would move on.
It wouldn't really matter though,
because you'd still be gone.

Author Joanne Boyle ~ Heartfelt

You Know You're Making Progress When--

You can remember your child with a smile--
You realize the painful comments others make are made in ignorance--
You can reach out to help someone else--
You stop dreading holidays--
You can sit through a church service without crying--
You can concentrate on something besides your child--
You can find something to thank God for--
You can be alone in your house without it bothering you--
You can talk about what happened to your child without falling apart--
You no longer feel you have to go to the cemetery every day or every week--
You can tolerate the sound of a baby crying--
You don't have to turn off the radio when his or her favorite music comes on--
You can find something to laugh about--
You can drive by the hospital or that intersection without screaming--
You no longer feel exhausted all the time--
You can appreciate a sunset, the smell of newly-mowed grass, the pattern on a butterfly's wings--

*~Judy Osgood
TCF, Carmel/Indianapolis, IN*



Knowing

When death will come
Life keeps on coming.
How you may cope
No way of knowing.

The future laughs
The children's smile
Our life ahead
Mile after mile.

Our family plans
We've always had,
A family dog,
A mom, a dad.

Then sickness comes
To both your two.
Where do we turn
To keep life new?

Through thick and thin,
From state to state,
You blindly follow
Before that date.

When final hope
Then slips away.
Your babies' hurt
Day after day.

Their laughter, grins
And sounds aren't here.
Replaced with loss
Our hearts now tear.

Their lives like light,
They slipped away.
Then all we do
Is hate and pray.

Their lives now gone
You keep on moving.
Our hearts must heal
You turn to grieving.

But death has come,
And life keeps moving.
Now we will cope,
Our hearts now knowing.

By Don Batson
South Kansas City TCF



- Vincent Van Gogh

White Roses

He walked into Russell Florists.
Without saying a word, the woman
gets him five white roses.
She gives him the same sorrowful
smile.
A smile that never reaches the eyes.
He pays and leaves as quietly as he
entered.
Once home, he pulls out the simple,
glass cylinder vase.
He cuts the roses, fills the vase with
water and gets back into his car.
In five short minutes his destination
is reached.
He walks a few feet through the
grass until he comes to the right
spot.
Like he has many times before, he
deli-cately arranges the five white
roses &
stakes the vase into the soft
ground.
One rose for him,
one for his wife,
and three for his remaining
children.
He slowly walks back to his car.
He stops and longingly looks back at
the grave once more.
In a month he'll walk back into
Russell Florists.
Without a word, the woman will get
him five white roses.

--By Lisa Yoakum,
sister of John (7/26/88-10/13/06)

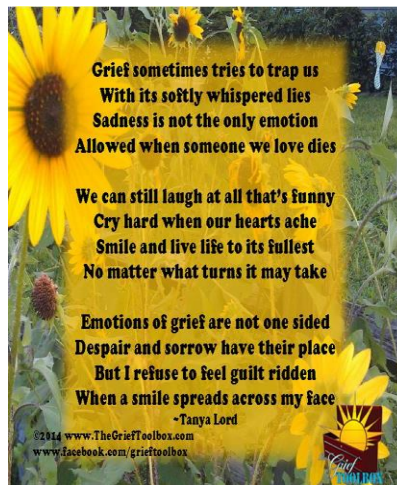
The Mask: "A Way of Life for a Bereaved Parent"

People say, "Oh my, oh my,
It's amazing how you're getting by.
I don't think that I could be
So strong if such a thing happened to
me."

But such persons are never around
When I remove the face of a clown,
And there for all the world to see
Is a person destroyed by tragedy?

So I look at these people and give a
grin
Hiding the sickness, I feel within,
And hope that I will find a way
To get me through another day.

--Laraine Rodriguez, TCF, Staten
Island, NY



Go With the Flow

Why are some people able
to successfully navigate
change while others have such
a hard time? One of the keys is
acceptance.

Resisting change is like
rowing against the current.
Everything lies there ahead of
you. But instead, you try to
row upstream, back to where
you once were.

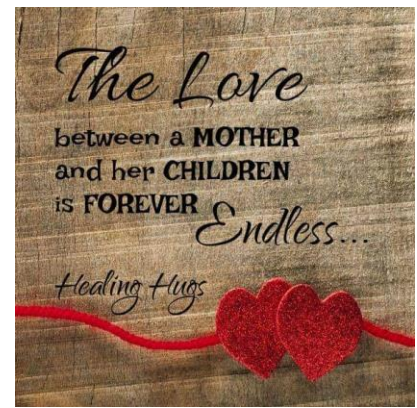
When you refuse to accept
change, you work against the
forward momentum taking you
to the next phase of your life
and remain stuck in the past.

Every thought that begins
with *I can't, I won't, or I don't*
equal resistance. Argue with
reality, and you'll lose every
time.

Align your boat with the
direction of the river. Stop
clinging to the rock, let go of
the oars and go with the flow.

On the other side of
acceptance is where peace
exists, where the solutions are.
Draw on your [inner]
resources...Begin to trust, and
you can become the person
[you were meant] to become
all along.

--Ariane de Vonvoisin



We are very grateful for donations received from:

Shareen Baxter in memory of her
son, Rodney
Kathy Wilcox in memory of her son,
Jeffrey.
Lori Wuellner in memory of
Miranda Williams.
Olene Carter in memory of Collin
Carter
**Please help us help others. Make a
LOVE GIFT today. Tax deductible
Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O
Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Ave,
Raytown, MO 64133**

**Remember when you came to your
first meeting, and someone was
there who was a little farther down
the road and gave you a hug or
shared something that made you
feel like you are not crazy. Well, if
you are a little bit farther down the
road, please feel free to come back
to our meetings and help families
that are just starting their grief
journey.**

Please visit our website at ,
www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org
Find us on Facebook at
[https://www.facebook.com/groups/
1582699755290182](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1582699755290182)

We have several volunteers who
write remembrance cards to families
on birthdays and death dates. Just a
reminder if you have an address
change, please email
phillipsplace@aol.com or mail a
6200 Kentucky Raytown, MO 64133
so the roster can be updated.
Please remember that you can give
to The Compassionate Friends
through your United Way pledge at
work or as a single gift, but you
MUST WRITE IT IN.