



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January-February 2020

Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips
24-Hour Help Line: (816)229-2640
Private Facebook Page: Eastern Jackson County TCF
Website: www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org

TCF National Headquarters
PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522
Website: www.compassionatefriends.org
630-990-0010

A New Year

As the year draws to its close, I pause...reflecting back over the long, empty months. My first full year without you—a milestone if only for the fact I survived at all, I suppose. Eighteen months ago, we were together as we had always been... Your death precipitated my reluctant birth, a tormented entrance into existence as a bereaved parent... a Mommy with an empty home, empty arms. No one left to mother.

I look back upon this year, January through December—winter, spring, summer, fall and finally winter again. The seasons have come, and they have departed, just as they did when you were here to adore the warmth of the July sun and hate the cold of the bleak gray skies of January. The coldness of winter has lingered in my heart, my loneliness and grief holding it there. (I've heard that if I let go of the coldness, the sunshine of your smile will remain... but I'm afraid.) I've gone through all the pain of all the holidays, the exquisite occasion of your birth date, celebrated in sorrow without you....

One of my closest friendships gradually faded in this past year of mourning—someone who loved you who could not bear the pain of your departure. This has added to the crushing burden of losing you. I have met far too many others in the same position I am in, and I began laying the groundwork for new friendships from these meetings. I have wept more than I believed possible, and (with your support?) faced and conquered the bleakest of the black times encountered so far...

But there have also been occasions for laughter in these months; and I have come to acknowledge that life will go on, regardless of the direction of the path I choose in my efforts to learn to live in a world that no longer holds my beloved, cherished child. I have learned more of death than I ever wished to

know and understand more of life and survival now as I struggle daily with my grief.

More and more I feel you trying to comfort me. I can sometimes feel your calm message... words you could have never spoken in life... surrounding me like the warmth of the love we shared for all of your life and most of mine: *"This is how it's supposed to be, Mommy. I'm all right."*

I love you, baby.
--Sally Migliaccio, TCF, Babylon,
Syosset & Rockville Centre, NY

Coping with Grief: Winter Blues

When the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, we often find ourselves feeling low. Some people call this the Winter Blues. When you are grieving, those blues can feel overwhelming. Grief itself *is* hard to cope with, and cold winds and dark nights can make those feelings seem more intense. Here are a few ideas that may help you cope with the Winter Blues:

Winter only lasts a few months. Use this *time to reflect* on your relationship with the person who died. Sometimes in our efforts to deny our loss, we rob ourselves of precious memories.

Reach out to friends or family when you can. Often our isolation is worse because we do not allow ourselves time with others. You are not alone. There are many other people going through a similar experience. Although your relationship with your loved one is special, other people can understand. Take the risk to ask someone over for coffee or tea. Share with them.

Take time to look through picture albums. Gather family to *share stories* when holidays are over, and the pressure is off. Make a new tradition during the dreary months of winter for family to gather for an evening of remembering.

Maybe other people are feeling the same way and are afraid to talk about it.

Try a *grief support group*. Sometimes all we need is to know other people hear us and understand. A group can help you to know you are normal.

Read: favorite stories, comedies, novels, or information about grief to understand your own reactions better. Somehow reading about topics helps us know we are not alone. You can find grief materials in your local library or hospice office.

Take good care of yourself. Eat right, rest and pamper your body. This goes for any season. Your body is under a tremendous amount of stress in adjusting to this loss.

Since grief affects us physically, paying attention to our bodies is important. Whether you prefer to do things alone or with others, *physical activity* helps. Taking a walk, doing simple aerobics, indoor swimming, playing racquetball or other activities can help you keep your body ready for the continued adjustment to loss. Feeling better physically can make a difference.

If you feel sad and *need to cry*, know that this is a normal reaction. You are not weak if you need to show your emotions.

Write a letter to your loved one. Sometimes we need to communicate with them. Going to the cemetery is okay and normal. If the weather prevents that, a letter can be very helpful.

Remember that you will survive this loss. The pain and ache can seem like it will last forever. The intensity will lessen in time, although you will always remember your loved one. Time does not necessarily "heal" all wounds, but it can help us adjust to the change. Take it minute by minute... then day by day.

--Lifted with love from the Sugar Land-Southwest Houston TCF Newsletter.

For the New Year

Where there is pain,
let there be softening.
Where there is bitterness,
let there be acceptance.
Where there is silence,
let there be communication.
Where there is loneliness,
let there be friendships.
Where there is despair,
let there be hope.
--Ruth Eiseman, TCF, Louisville, KY

First Anniversary

A year has come and gone since I held you in my arms, the day you died. It seems like a blink of an eye on the one hand and an eternity on the other. Many people thought of you on this day. Some were able to share their sadness with me and we shed tears together. Others didn't want to upset me, so they didn't mention your name. How can anyone believe that I don't think about you unless they say your name? I guess that people don't really understand the constant emptiness I feel without you, or the good feeling I get when someone lets me know that they remember you. I wish I could say to friends & family:
When you see me crying at the mention of Ali's name, they are tears of pain and an expression of grief. I must cry in order to heal. Please make it comfortable for me to express my feelings so that I can progress through my grief.

The steps I am taking are baby steps. Please don't expect me to return to normal just because a year has passed since my daughter's death. The fact is that I'll never be the person I was before this terrible tragedy occurred. I'm a different person now. Please be patient with me because I don't know the new me yet.

I will never forget my daughter or the joy and love she brought to my life. It helps me to know that others remember her too. Please share your memories with me so that Ali may live for a few moments as you saw her.

There are no shortcuts through grief. Please don't push me. I need to feel and experience my grief without a set timetable, without expectations I cannot live up to. I know you care & are concerned, but you can't take this pain from me the way you would like to. I do need you for support and acceptance.

This is the first of many anniversaries. I can't imagine the pain

lessening, although many say it does. I just know I made it through the first of everything without Allison, and I am beginning the second year, wounded but alive.

--Grace Kuther, TCF Manhattan



Communion

*On the first anniversary of your death,
I went to the kitchen,
set the table with your Superman placemat
and pulled up your chair.
I made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich,
and removed the crust as always
for a special occasion.
I cut it into quarters and arranged the
triangles on your red plate.
I poured milk in your blue plastic
Crayola crayon mug, put on its pointed top
with the hole in the tip for a straw.
I had no straws. I don't buy them anymore.
Sitting next to your place,
I apologized for no straw.
I apologized for your death.
I apologized for not being there.
When I finished,
I wiped my eyes with your napkin,
gave thanks, ate the bread
and drank the milk.*

--Shelley Wagner, The Andrew Poems

Two Years Later

It has been two years, and it seems like yesterday. The pain is two years older, but still the same; the tears are two years older, but still the same. Will it be three times worse next year, or four times worse the next? I don't know.

Bradley is two years older and will not remember you, except for the things I can tell him. I sit him on the counter next to the refrigerator, and he looks at the pictures I have on it of him and his big brother. I explain to him that he was only two when you were killed. He won't remember how you used to tape leaves from the trees on the door to your room, so he wouldn't get into your things. He was so afraid of the leaves when they would blow in the yard.

He won't remember going with us to get your learner's license, running around wanting cookies and something to drink, distracting you from your test. He was so funny, and you were standing there rolling your eyes at him. He won't remember riding in the front seat while you drove home, with me in the back. I was so proud. He won't remember his two short years with you, but he'll know—I promise. --Marilyn Baker, TCF Atlanta

I'm Still Counting

My son's favorite character on Sesame Street was The Count. Todd would laugh and count and laugh some more whenever The Count would appear on PBS. "Come on, Mom," he would say, "Count with me." So, I would join him, and we'd count together. When my child died, I started counting hours. One hour since he died, two hours, then 24 hours, 36 hours, 96 hours. I started counting weeks, then months and finally years. I was totally focused on the moment that my son left this earth.

Now I count the years and months, weeks and days. While this may not sound like progress, it truly is a step back into life. Three years, seven months, one week and one day. I stopped adding the hours. Moreover, when people ask me about it, I generally say about 3½ years. I try to keep it simple for outsiders who can't begin to understand.

Every month I dread the 19th. Another month is added to the time between my son's last breath and now. It's almost as if time might separate us, erase him from the memory of those who knew and loved him.

Despite my obsession with counting, I am moving forward in many ways. I think of my child each day. I honor his life each day, and I feel a real apprehension about his daughters each day. Their lives are horribly different from what they might have been if Todd had lived...

I know I cannot change this. So along with my private obsession, there is a deep lingering sadness for my son's children and for opportunities lost. In the meantime, I count years, months and days. I keep my unconditional love for my child in my heart and in my life. And I continue to reach out and become the person I am meant to be. And I'm still counting with Todd.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF Katy, TX

Bereavement Balance Beam

Notice the athlete as she carefully
and gracefully strolls across
the balance beams.

She makes it look so easy.

We watch and hold our breath,
hoping she won't fall.

She artistically swivels at the end,
goes back to the middle,
and without missing a beat,
lands perfectly on the mat below.

I am not an athlete, nor an acrobat,
yet I walk a balance beam every day.

I tread gingerly across the beam;

I know you haven't noticed.

I hold my breath, not as a spectator,
but as a participant.

I wear an outfit not of spandex
nor sweats, but of steel-plated armor
guarding my emotions.

I give a presentation of poise and
control, which I've learned
with each step I've taken.

I know how to survive,
take each day one step at a time,
sometimes pausing for laughter,
sometimes trembling with tears.

Then there were the times I fell off,
which in the beginning took but a mere
reminder of what I've lost.

And I toppled off the balance beam only
to struggle silently
to climb back on.

What caused the fall?

- Perhaps a mention of his name,
- perhaps hearing his favorite song,
- seeing a young boy on a bicycle
and knowing it wasn't James,
- seeing a mom at the store shopping
for back-to-school items,
- reminiscing about bedtime stories
which are now no longer told,
- watching someone else's child
at the soccer fields,
- driving in the car alone with no one
next to me in the passenger seat.

But I learned to stay on
the balance beam,

handle those moments of pain and loss,
keep my composure, let the tears fall,
but let not my steps falter.

Turn the corner without tripping,
keep life in balance and in perspective
with a huge void on the other side.

Now, almost five years later,

I've nearly perfected this trick.

Can't compete with a professional athlete.
They have the physical, visible aspect
of this performance down pat.

I'm still working on the emotional,
mental portion but doing quite well.

Till I hear my young niece
gets to be a mom,

--or my sister-in-law moans
that her son is away for a week
and the house is so quiet,

--or yet another friend
has become a grandmother,

--someone else we know
is graduating or marrying,

--my nephew turns 16 and gets a license,
--all the reminders of who I'm missing:
what James never will accomplish,
the opportunities

that James missed out on,
the life I wish I could see James
experience and be a part of.

It's all a matter of balance,
keeping the stride,

maintaining a sense of normalcy,
balancing, in spite of a broken heart
and an emotional handicap.

And learning that when falling below,
there are friends to help me back up,
memories to give me smiles,
determination to live the life
James would have wanted...
for both of us.

--*Meg Avery, TCF Winnett*

Ode to Endurance

seven years since you left
you'd think my heart would heal
seven years – science tells us
it takes for our whole body to renew
all molecules regenerated
so I think I should be ready
to let go of you
but the hole
in my soul
persists

--*Lynn Marti Avant, Ames Iowa*

Ten Years of Lessons from the Heart

It seems impossible that it's been
ten years since my two oldest children—
21-year-old Denis and 19-year-old
Peggy—were killed in the same car
accident! Peggy died instantly and four
days later, the day after we buried her,
Denis died. In one week, we planned
two funerals, proclaiming to the world
how much we loved them and how
unique each was! Now, looking at their
pictures and reminiscing, I ask myself
what the past ten years have taught me,
and I must admit that it's been a lot!

My life has changed, my family
tapestry has been rewoven. Different
routines and traditions have been
established, and new celebrations,
friendships and interests have been

developed. I have discovered the things
that ease my heart and allow me to
breathe without feeling that excruciating
pain from losing someone dearly loved.

In the early days of my grief, all I
wanted to know was, how do I survive?
In an effort to learn, I read everything I
could get my hands on. I ran to the
public library, the bookstores, searching
their shelves for words that would
soothe my pain, reading the heart-felt
prose and poetry of all those bereaved
persons before me. That is how I first
heard of The Compassionate Friends,
which later became such an integral part
of my life. Story after story touched my
heart and gave me guidelines for
surviving.

On Sundays I reverently took my
favorite paperbacks to church and read
their comforting phrases, cover to cover,
as the priest and congregation
worshipped around me. Anything that
moved me and gave me a consoling
thought, I memorized and shared with
my husband Joe and my daughter Annie.
Reading was my first step to recovery in
those dark beginning days, pulling me
out of the depths and filling me with
positive thoughts to get through a day.

To conquer the utter exhaustion that
assaulted my body (a big component of
the grief process), I learned to rearrange
my activities and to carefully pick and
choose those things that would not be
overwhelming and might even bring
some enjoyment. Simplifying chores
and cutting plans into shortened hours
made it possible for me to make a list of
things I could handle and rescue me
from defeat. As I got stronger, I was
able to include more activities and to
increase the time I spent on them.

--*Elaine Stillwell*

At first

my very name was grief.

My thoughts were grief
and everything I touched
was turned to grief.

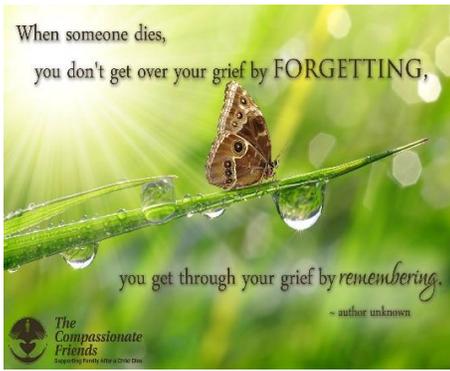
But now

I own the light of memories.

My eyes can see you,
and my thoughts can know you
for what you really are:
more than a young life lost,
more than a radiance
gone into night.

Today you have become
a gift beyond my grief,
a treasure to my world
though you have left
my world and me behind.

--*Sascha Wagner, Wintersun*



Putting the Winter Behind Us

[By the time you read this, we may or may not still be looking at a winter landscape, with the earth cold, the land sharply defined.] Underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb—a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories easily recollect those early days. Yet as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too find places of warmth, change, love and growth deep within. Let our hearts & minds dwell in these places and be...renewed by them. Let us have the courage to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, new acceptance, new understanding or new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

--Marie Andres, TCF South Maryland

A Valentine's Day Wish

To all TCF Moms and Dads: How I wish I could bring your child back to you for Valentine's Day—24 hours you could spend telling your child of your love. But alas, we are doomed to spend another Valentine's Day without our beloved children.

Others who have not lost a child tend to take for granted these very special days. A card that says, "I love you, Mom and Dad" should be carefully folded and saved in a special place. All too many parents consider these cards to

be renewable commodities. "There's no need to save this one—we'll always get another one next year."

For many of us next year came and there was no card. Tears of sadness replaced tears of joy on this special day. But for many of us, the memories remain of those earlier Valentine's Days gone by. Because our child's love remains with us, our child will never truly be gone.

This year on Valentine's Day, let us shed tears of joy that we had even a short time with our child—for that, no matter how short, can never be taken from us. —Wayne Loder

The Promise of Spring

When February comes, there is finally an end in sight to the long winter. Sometimes melting snow reveals the green tips of an early crocus or even the exquisite blossom itself, a soft flower of hope invading a harsh landscape of graying snow and biting wind and ominous sky--a small promise of new life to come.

My heart, grieving for my son who died, was like that image of winter. For somehow, even during the darkest, coldest moments, an unexpected sign of hope would intrude. And as the hours and days and months dragged on, my heart finally learned once again to be open to the promise of new life. Painful memories melted into loving ones. Life that seemed forever dormant once again sprang forth from my heart.

In living hopefully and lovingly, the season of the heart can change. The loving memories of your child, like the flower in the snow, can be the beginning of the end of winter.

--Maryann Kramer, Arlington Heights, IL, TCF

The Bulldog Shirt and Chris

Not long before I lost you, you came over one day with this shirt. It was big and gray and it had a Georgetown University Bulldog emblem on it. You were tall and lean, but you always wore your clothes too big and this shirt was no exception. It was a big man's shirt with a tough-looking bulldog on the front of it. It was definitely not a shirt I would have picked out for myself, but you wanted me to keep it and wear it. I didn't understand why, but I wore it.

At the time you gave it to me, I had no idea what this big, bulldog shirt would come to mean. This shirt quickly became my favorite shirt; it goes with a pair of jeans and I wear it when I go out

for breakfast, when I'm relaxing around the house watching television, and I also wear it to sleep in.

After you left me, this shirt became much more than a comfortable shirt to wear. It became my special memory of you. I wore this shirt so much and washed it so many times that it has acquired many holes, and every time I pull it out of my drawer to wear, I vow that it will be the last time. I need to put it away and preserve it for a special keepsake to hold and treasure forever and ever.

But that's not why you gave it to me. You wanted me wear it and each time I do, I think of you. I just can't put this shirt away, just like I can't let my memories of you ever be put away.

I remember asking you why you wanted me to wear this shirt. I said, "Chris, it fits you so much better than it fits me." You said, "Moma, I just want you to have it and wear it."

So, honey, I did, and I still do. If you only knew how many times I have worn that shirt and how many times I have held it in my arms and cried over losing you.

Well, Chris, I still find comfort whenever I put that shirt on. And I know in my heart that soon, very soon, I will have to put it away in a plastic bag in order to keep it. If I continue washing it and wearing it, I will lose it. This way, if I put it away in a plastic bag, I will be able to get out that old bulldog shirt when I'm feeling lost, sad and lonely. And I can remember the comfort of your long skinny arms wrapped tightly around me. Maybe it will even wipe the tears from my eyes. I will always love you, Chris. Love, Moma
--In memory of Christopher Alan Carter
(7/21/77 - 2/12/94)

by Denise Vicic, Chris' Mom, TCF of South Central Kentucky



The Little Bear Who Lost His Boy

Once upon a time there was a little bear whose name was Ted. He was a very special little bear, for his was the best boy in the whole world...well, at least in the Beforetime.

Today, you see, he was a sad little bear. He sat at the side of the road and looked as though a tear would drown him. He was the scruffiest, muftiest little bear you ever did see and just by looking at him you would never know how special he was. It just so happened that Nana Bear was walking down the street on her way to town when she saw Little Ted looking ever so sad and stopped to talk to him.

"Why are you so sad, Little Ted?" said Nana Bear kindly. "You used to be the happiest little bear in the land."

"That was in the Before times," answered Little Ted, sad-as-sad could be. "I don't have my boy anymore. I've lost him, I'm never going to find him again and I am so unhappy."

"Well," said Nana Bear. "Suppose you tell me all about it." And she sat down on the tree stump by the side of the road, settling herself in quite comfortably, and waited for Ted to tell her his story. But he didn't say a word.

"What was your boy's name?" asked Nana Bear. She knew quite well what the boy's name was, for everyone had known what a special boy he had been. But she wanted to hear Little Ted say his name.

"Nigel," answered Ted, and he hiccupped. A big tear started to roll down his face, and straight away he stopped it and was Very, Very Brave.

"Why, Little Ted, whatever are you doing?" asked Nana Bear, very puzzled, seeing the tear stop rolling in an instant and the Very, Very Brave face freeze Ted's face like concrete on a very hot day.

"I'm being Very, Very Brave," answered Little Ted, bravely. "Very Brave," he added on, just to make sure she knew what a good little bear he was being.

"Well," said Nana Bear. "But WHY are you being Very, Very Brave? It doesn't look like it makes you very happy, and I am sure I don't know what good of a thing being Very, Very Brave is if it doesn't make you happy."

"The Bear by the Field said I must," said Little Ted, wisely. "He said that losing your boy can be Very, Very Hard and I must be Very, Very Brave."

"Oh," said Nana Bear, thoughtfully. "Tell me, Little Ted, what else did the Bear by the Field tell you?"

"Well," said Little Ted, remembering as best as he could, "he said that I would get another boy soon & that would make everything better."

"Oh," said Nana Bear, even more thoughtfully. "And would it make everything better if you got another boy right away?"

Little Ted sat mournfully. "No one could ever be the best boy that Nigel was. He was

wonderful and he loved me ever so much. I don't think any other boy would ever be as good."

"Aha," said Nana Bear, "I see. What else did the Bear by the Field tell you?"

"He said that I would feel much better soon. It's just a matter of time, he said, just a matter of time. But I don't want to forget Nigel. I want to remember what a nice boy he was. Does that mean in time I will forget all about him?"

"Oh, I don't think so, Little Ted," said Nana Bear. "When you love someone as much as you loved Nigel, I don't think you'll ever forget him. What else did the Bear by the Field say?"

"He didn't," said Little Ted, sadly. "I wanted to talk about Nigel and he didn't. I said I wished I had my boy back, and he said he thought the corn would grow nicely. I said I wanted to remember my boy forever and he said what nice weather we are having. I suppose that all the bears are tired of hearing me talk about my boy."

"Oh, Little Ted," said Nana Bear, "come up here this very instant and not a second longer."

Little Bear climbed up on Nana Bear's lap. He was very glad to be there because it was hard being Very, Very Brave all the time, and it was so good to have someone hug and cuddle him again. He did not realize what an all-alone feeling it had been without his boy to hug him and kiss him. He snuggled down in Nana Bear's lap, his heart aching for the missing of Nigel.

"Should I tell you what I think, Little Ted?" she said softly as she stroked his little bear head. "I think that Nigel would want you to cry if you were sad. If Nigel was peeking from behind those bushes and saw your Very, Very Brave face, why, he might not even know it was you.

"And I will tell you what else I think... Maybe one day you will find another boy to love and who will love you very much. But the little soft fuzzy spot in your heart that belongs to Nigel will always be just for him and not for your new boy. Your new boy will have his very own place in your heart just for him.

"Time is a taker of many things, but not a taker of heartache. All the time in the world will not stop you missing Nigel. But time cannot steal your memories and cannot take away all the good times you ever had in your whole lives together.

"And Little Ted, of course you must talk about him. You loved him so much, and it would be hard not to talk about him. You must pick your very good friends who loved him too and you can talk about him together. And there's a spot right here on my lap whenever a Nigel thought needs to be spoken."

"Oh, thank you, Nana Bear," breathed Little Ted softly. "Thank you so much for telling me that. And Nana Bear, tell me just one more thing—can I be happy again one day? Will I be sad for my boy forever?"

"Oh, what a wonderful thing that will be when you have happy thoughts," said Nana Bear. "After all, you have only lost your boy for a short while. Boys aren't like socks in the dryer, never to be seen again. In the Big Cloud in the Sky, in the Aftertimes, you will see him again. In the meantime, you have to love the world for him because he cannot do it by himself anymore. When you see the little butterfly flying around, you must look at it for your boy, and laugh for him and dance with it for him. You must live all the happiness left in the world and store it up in your heart to take for him when you see him again. When you are ready, you can begin to store those happy thoughts, Little Ted, when you are ready."

And a big tear rolled down Little Ted's face, and another and another.

Pretty soon, there were so many tears he made a puddle, and the puddle made a bath. Pretty soon, Ted was all wet and before you know it, he was clean as a whistle and didn't look anywhere near as scruffiest-muftiest as he did before. And the tears made the flowers grow and the butterflies come, and before you knew it the world was clean and sparkling and wonderful again. Did Little Ted ever stop missing his boy? Oh, no, never in a million years. But he learned that it is a fine thing to cry and get the fur all nice and clean, and he learned that tears grow flowers and flowers bring butterflies. And Little Ted learned that one day, in a long and far-off time, a bear and his boy would see each other again, but until that time he would keep his eye out for joy-things to store up and take as a great and wonderful gift to the best boy who ever lived in this whole wide world.

--Joseph Farrugia

PEOPLE SAY

*you don't know what
you've got till it's gone.*

TRUTH IS,

*you knew what you had,
you just never thought
you'd lose it.*

-AUTHOR UNKNOWN



*"I only miss you
On days that
End with a
y"*

Alan Pedersen
Angels Across the USA

I Will Love You

As long as I can dream,
As long as I can think,
As long as I have a memory...
I will love you.

As long as I have eyes to see,
and ears to hear,
and lips to speak...
I will love you.

As long as I have a heart to feel,
a soul stirring within me,
An imagination to hold you...
I will love you.

As long as there is time,
As long as there is love,
As long as I have a breath
to speak your name...

Because I loved you more than
anything...
In all the world.

--Daniel Haughian, *Coeur d'Alene*
Chapter TCF



Losing a child is not natural.

In life there is loss, but no parent ever expects to bury their child. Parents not only grieve this tragic loss but also grieve for all that was supposed to come. Help us to make sure that every parent knows that they

need not walk alone.

we who were left behind
to know the shadows
we who were left behind
to touch the night
we who were left behind
to heal the darkness and
to share this day

we who have turned once more
to hope and loving
though we were given graves
and lifeless children--

we hear them now
these children and their
song
reminding us
reminding us again
that we must fill the time
we spend in life
with understanding
tenderness and peace
--Sascha Wagner

Back into the World

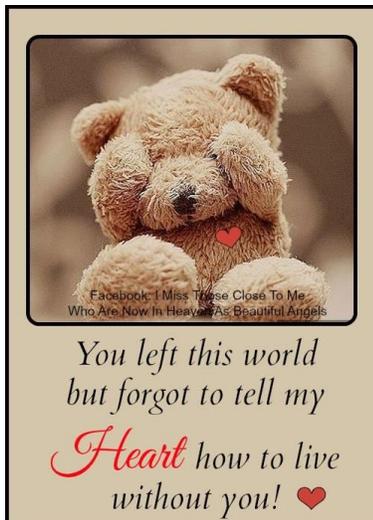
There would always come those
moments when a bright red top found
under the lilac, a snatch of tune, a small
mitten at the back of a closet, a child's
footprint in the soft earth of the back
yard would cut into me, sweeping Teddy
back with terrible force, and I would go
down into the basement and sit on one
of the sawhorses and give way to long
shuddering sobs, until the seizure finally
wore itself out and let me go again. And
then I would wipe my face and climb
back upstairs again, where the world--
impossibly, capriciously--was going
along exactly as it had before.

--Anton Myrer, *The Last Convertible*

Silk Roses for Susan

I took silk roses to your grave today.
Valentine's Day is coming
and you loved red roses.
I sat there awhile and remembered your last
Valentine's Day.
I kissed you and gave you candy
with money stuck in the top.
You tilted your head
in that certain way you had
and smiled, pleased at the gift.
Sweet daughter, I miss you so.
There was still much of life to share.
Nineteen is way too young for dying.
I would buy fresh roses for you every day if I
could have you back.
But I can't change the ending.
So, I took silk roses to your grave today,
and cried fresh tears instead.

--Ginger Elwood, TCF, Knoxville, TN



A Valentine Waiting for You

There's a valentine waiting for you
That's different from all the others.
It's there every month at our meetings
For fathers, mothers, sisters & brothers.

Its envelope is made of caring.
The glue of understanding seals it tight.

This non-judgmental group
who've been there
Help to take away your fear and fright.

So come join with us together.
Read your loving message printed clear,
In not only this month's Valentine,
But all those throughout the year.

--Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA

we who were left behind
to know the shadows
we who were left behind
to touch the night
we who were left behind
to heal the darkness and
to share this day

we who have turned once more
to hope and loving
though we were given graves
and lifeless children--

we hear them now
these children and their song
reminding us
reminding us again
that we must fill the time
we spend in life
with understanding
tenderness and peace
--Sascha Wagner

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.

Love Gifts

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

For Remembrance dates please visit our website at

www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org

Find us on Facebook at

<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 note to TCF, C/O Theresa Phillips 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.**