



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January-February 2018

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Faces of Grief

Though winter's delicate, lacy snowflakes may remind us of the lace-trimmed hearts of February's Valentines, the "mourning" heart seems frozen in time. The bitter winds of loneliness blow mournfully through our souls. Death has tapped us on the shoulder, introducing his brother, Grief, who has moved into our hearts to take up unwelcome residence. Worn and exhausted by our pain, we have little energy to evict the intruder. It's hard for us to remember that behind the clouds that have obscured our vision, the sun still faithfully shines.

"Love" is apparently the thought for the season, and we are reminded of its tenderness at every turn. But a piece of the fiber of our lives has been torn away, and love seems a vague and unfulfilled promise that belongs only to others. Hearts and flowers, lace and love, romantic verse and melody seem to have abandoned us as we grope in the darkness of our beloved's absence. Will the pain ever end? Will the hope of joy and renewal once again warm the frozen places in our hearts? Gradually, as the hurt begins to soften, and the thawing relief of healing slowly begins to melt the icy grip of our pain, hope does begin to "spring eternal."

Roses, traditional in February's favorite holiday, remind us that summer will return (even if it is not on the traditional calendar's schedule!). It's unlikely that we will ever again perceive the usual symbols of love in quite the same way as before, but in many ways our concepts of *genuine* love will be stronger, richer and less assailable. Frivolous and shallow affection are absent from our thoughts. Deeper commitments and more demonstrative attention have become our new marching orders.

In costly lessons, we've learned firsthand how fragile and fleeting life can be, and we are now resolute in our

determination to announce to our remaining dear ones the importance of our bonds with them. We abandon the intimidation of "limits" such as the archaic notions that "men" mustn't cry or say, "I love you," or that we're too busy just now to pay better attention to someone's needs.

As little by little our pain softens and recedes, and we learn that suffering is but for a season, we also learn that LOVE doesn't die.

In our emotional lives, Valentines can now take on a new significance as precious reminder of the love that still exists on *both* sides of life. Love lives within our hearts, and even Grief can't steal it away. Love is our bridge over the rainbow.

--Andrea Gambill, *Bereavement Magazine*

Night Agonies

In the deepest part of the night, when I am alone with my blackest grief, I reach deep inside myself and measure the depth of love for my child.

I focus on these feelings, now made unequivocal by death, and realize that an emotion so strong, so pure, cannot be obliterated by the physical act of dying. My love lives on. This link to my child remains, unbroken, unaltered. This bond, the strongest two people can share, continues.

But how can it remain, if my child does not? A solid bridge must have a secure footing on either side. The strength of the love that flows to my child from the deepest part of my being remains as it was in her life. I must conclude it is still anchored in the very fiber of my child's soul—on the other side of death.

With the reawakened awareness of the connections of our love, I find proof of her continuance, a soothing reassurance that though she is no longer with me, she still IS.

--Sally Migliaccio, *TCF Palm Beach, FL*



Valentine's Day

The holidays are hard on all of us, but the letdown after seems to halt our grief work. As bad as the holidays are, they are filled with people and noise, some laughter and tears. In general, you have to roll with the activity of the larger family.

It's quiet now. It would be a good time to "reach out and touch someone." Touch someone maybe with a call or maybe with an old-fashioned handmade valentine. Think of the people around you who have helped you. It is easier to write and mail kind words than it is to say them face to face. If that just isn't your style, spend some time at the card shop; search out the sentiment that best reveals your inner feelings about your spouse, children, relatives or friends.

We spend so much time indoors these cold winter days it's easy to allow ourselves to crawl into an inner shell. Make an effort to come out of yourself.

Or try writing and decorating a card to your dead child. Perhaps you could use some of your time to find the lovely cards of past Valentine's Days from him/her. It may take courage to reread them, and it may bring tears to your eyes. But maybe it will bring a little joy to your soul to remember how innocently and sincerely they loved you.

Some of us have no card from our special children, but we know the special love from our "Angel Cupid's arrow." Our hearts have been pierced too. Use February 14th as a Grief Work Day! --Mary Valazquez, Warrington, PA

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 nonjudgmental 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

It Is Time for Love

February has fewer days than most months, and that may be of special significance to us, as our children had fewer days than most. When we think of this month, the most outstanding day, perhaps, is St. Valentine's Day. It is a time for love.

When we were school age we had a special chance to give and receive cards in those decorated boxes in our primary classrooms. Perhaps it is the one holiday when children can really do something for everyone. Addressing a card to each and every classmate made you think of how you felt about each one and wonder about how they felt about you.

Love is found in every day of every year, but February and Valentine's Day are very special. I wish I could remember just how it felt to get a "nicer" Valentine from someone I sent a "nicer" one to. It is so long ago, and there have been so many, much more significant happenings in my life. But sometimes, I'd like to remember just how it felt. I am sending along this Valentine Love Note to each of you right now and hope that you know it is one of the "nicer" ones, because each of you is very special to me. Somehow, I don't wonder how you feel—I know.

As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's, we begin to find a different kind of love than we ever expected to experience.

--Rosalie Baker, TCF Rochester, NY

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 love you
more than anything...

In all the world.

--Daniel Haughian, Coeur d'Alene TCF

Heart Room

When I first measured my heart,
I could not see; the light was dim.
A friend held the lamp while I looked in.
There was room for another person's
pain and sorrow,
And plenty of room for other people's
tears.

The depth of my compassion
everyone could see.
But none of it really mattered until
There was room in my heart for me
--P. G. White

The Season of the Heart

This is the Season of the Heart! Yet many of us will be asking how to live during this season with a heart that is broken. What is it that our hearts know during these days? What are the feelings that pulsate and ebb and flow? Is it:

- The Heart that catches its breath on a memory and is overwhelmed?
- The Heart where hope seems absent?
- The Heart that feels it absolutely cannot hold one more ounce of pain?
- The Heart that knows the fleeting smile of a loved one?
- The Heart that catches a fragment of joy and is warmed?
- The Heart that knows pain, and keeps on loving?
- The Heart that is tempted to lie still and lonely?
- The Heart that searches for the acceptance of a friend?
- The Heart that is one day, suddenly, surprisingly single?

Questions arise! Why is a heart red? Why does it have two lobes?

- A heart is so vulnerable, so easily bloodied.
- A Heart consists of opposites, changed by sorrow and by joy.
- A Heart, when whole, includes all emotions.
- A Heart can lie cold & sad & broken
- A Heart can grow and heal and love...

We each have our choices to make!

--Marie Andrews, Southern Maryland TCF

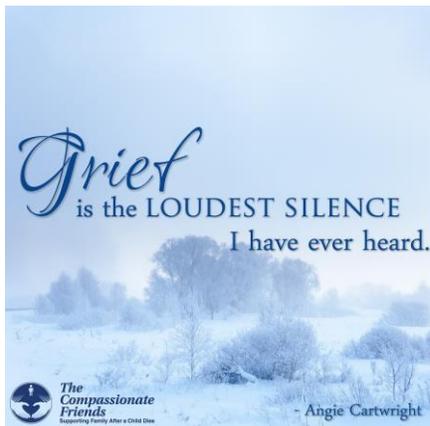


A Fitting Tribute

Came the darkness of new winter
We huddled together in frozen disbelief
Lowering your precious vessel
into cold unfeeling earth.
No bird sang nor shone the sun to cast
mocking shadows on our despair.
A light went out in the world that day,
leaving us to shiver
in the blackness of your absence.
Four seasons of our sadness have passed
since that bleak day.
And now we return to put cold stone
above your head.
It does not seem a fitting monument
for a man of joy.
Too many tears have been shed,
I can weep no more.
Others may not believe,
but every day your spirit comforts me.
Your voice still speaks within my heart.
And while I may long for the warmth
of your hands on my shoulders,
I can feel your workings in God's plan.
I believe ...that no loss is forever.
Today I come to bury my grief.
Tomorrow may we rejoice
that you have lived and loved us,
erecting a monument of joy
in life's celebration,
singing a eulogy of love
for the brokenhearted,
lighting an eternal flame of hope
for those in despair.
In your loving memory
let us seek to perfect the world,
and in so doing, perfect ourselves.
I believe with perfect faith
that you are forever. Your body may lie
in this sorrowful ground,
but your spirit soars with eagles,
still rages at injustice,
reaches out in loving kindness,
dances with the ecstasy of life
that never ends
And laughs deep in the belly
to cleanse us of our mortal sadness.
--Judy Gradford, Rochester NY TCF

Like a Tree in Winter

Like a tree in winter
which has lost its leaves,
we look ahead to spring
for new growth and the
warmth of the sun to heal
the pain in our hearts.
Let us make February a time to
reach out to each other and give that
warmth from our hearts, and in return,
we will find new growth.
--Pat Dodge, TCF, Sacramento Valley CA



In the Glow of Freshly Fallen Snow

Last night, in the glow of
freshly fallen snow,
I felt for the first time in months
a sense of peace.
A feeling of wonder overcame me
and I looked around to see
if you were there.
Later, I thought to myself—
Why did I need to look?
I know, as surely as I know
how to breathe,
that you are with me always.
You are closer to me now
than ever before
and the only difference is that,
instead of opening my eyes to see you,
now I must open my heart.
--Sandy Goodman, "Love Never Dies"

A Lesson in Grammar

If you are like me...
I don't want anybody to quibble with me
about whether my son's birthday
is or was November 20, because
(a) it is,
(b) it was, and
(c) it always will be
And, as to whether I *have* or *had*
two children...because
(a) I do,
(b) I did, and
(c) I always will have
--Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA

On Your Birthday

I wrote this date this morning, paused,
And felt the room grow cold;
it always does
When I remember all of it—
Down to the last petal
tossed by winds
Above the upturned earth.
This time the chill does not leave so
easily.
It would have been your birthday.
Soon, I shall be as old as you will ever
be.
--Sibling Wanda M. Trawick, Acme, PA

Can You Remember

With winter's tumbling snow
the roses silent
and the water ice...
With trees so barren
that your mind refuses
to picture leaves
and green and even blossoms...
Can you remember,
can you feel again,
that spring did come
from winter every year?
--Sascha Wagner

A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one
but you knows the gaping hole left in
your life when someone you love has
died. And no one but you can mourn the
silence that was once filled with laughter
and song. It is the nature of love and of
death to touch every person in a totally
unique way.
Comfort comes from knowing that
others have made the same journey. And
solace comes from understanding how
others have learned to sing again.
--Helen Steiner Rice



There is an interesting discussion in the
Talmud, an ancient Jewish writing. Jews
have a custom of rending their garments—
literally tearing their clothes—to symbolize
the ripping apart that death brings. The
question was raised, after the period of
mourning, could you sew the garment and
use it again? The teachers answered yes, but
when you mend it, you should not tuck the
edges under so it would not look as if it
never had been torn. This symbolized the
fact that life after grief *is not the same* as
before. The rent will show. The next
question was, can you sell that garment? The
teachers answered no. The rending and
mending of our life is ours, and others cannot
wear it.

No, we don't get over it. We change and
grow. Our life has a difference which is ours
alone. Perhaps as Compassionate Friends we
can help each other make that difference the
kind of difference that increases the world's
supply of compassion, love and healing.
--Dennis Klass, St. Louis, MO

*These days are the
Winter of the soul.
But spring comes
and brings new life and beauty,
because of the growth...
of roots in the dark.*
--Iris Bolton, Atlanta, GA

Winter

Winter can be the cruelest season of the year, cold and dreary, depressing and long. This can also be true of your grief's winter: the air feels raw, days grow tedious, nights go on forever. The shock and numbness that first shielded you have worn away. Now you must face the fact head on about what lies all around you—all that you miss and all that you fear, all your sorrow and all your dread. There can be a piercing loneliness to winter grief. Not only are you separated from the one who died, you can also feel isolated from those around you, perhaps even alienated from yourself. People who do not understand how plodding grief can be may not be ready to bear all of your moods or all of your moans, and your world can appear so different, so silent, so stark, so empty.

This is exactly the world you need. The winter of your grief is a time to do what is best for you: a time to be, just to *be*. A part of you may wish to push ahead. Winter says, "Take your time." A part of you may wish to get this over with as quickly as possible. Winter says, "Be patient." Something within you may want to escape. Winter says, "This is what you need right now."

This time offers an opportunity to do what you may not often do—sit and be quiet, walk and be aware, write or talk and be reflective. You can spend time with yourself and make a close friend. You can immerse yourself in the stillness and let it inform you. You can open your eyes to the starkness that is around you and find unusual beauty. You can use this time of barrenness to begin healing.

--James E. Miller,

Winter Grief, Summer Grace

Little White Blanket

Little white blanket...first snow on the grave since you left. How can it be? Just yesterday you were here. You left in summer's humid heat. Cicadas sang your eulogy over fresh turned soil. Now snow's first appearance covers your smooth, flawless sleeping ground.

Little white blanket covers and cares for you when I no longer can. I care for you now with prayers and memories and by framing photographs of times gone by. Photos of you and me. When I look at us, I can still feel you sitting next to me, breathing, smiling, living your life with me.

Then I feel you gone from here, from me. I never knew before how to feel what's not there. Feeling the aching void where many times you sat. Feeling the not-me-ness of me, without you.

Little white blanket, tuck in my loved one. Cover her gently, make her comfortable, send her my love. When spring comes and the little white blanket disappears, let the crocuses I planted bloom their first blooms, counting every first since you left. First morning without you, first week alone, first month bereft, first Halloween and Thanksgiving and Christmas, first New Year...a strange year without you. With the

passing of time, I fear I'll forget you, so I hold onto my grief, as I once held onto you.

Little white blanket, first snow on the grave, assure me she's cared for, that she won't forget me, that we are still us, that I am still me, that somewhere in spirit she is, nature's wise surround for my departed. Little white blanket, teach me how to mend the hole ripped in the fabric of my life, christen the ground, baptize me in understanding the cycles of life...living, loving and letting go.

--Living with Loss Magazine, Bereavement Publications



PTSD

When will it ever stop?
The nightmares, flashbacks, pain?
Why does it keep on haunting me?
Why is it back again?
I think I'm doing everything
just the way I should
I talk about it when I feel the need
tears and prayers—but my heart feels
like wood!

This latest intense sadness
hurts me so deep inside
It's like my heart has finally
accepted the fact that he died
I know that sounds very strange
and I don't even try to pretend
to understand the reasons why
the hurt is back again
Stronger more painful than ever before
I hate it so, feeling this way
I also know the only thing is can do
is to wait for a new, better day
-- Jenny Donaldson, South Kansas City TCF

TCF asks for donations in memory of our children who have died. Our activities support the grief work of many families. We also work to educate members of our community about the grief process & how they can support bereaved parents.

Thank you for the following Love Gift donations:

A donation made by Ken and Kathy

Wilcox in memory of their son Jeff.

A donation made by Stella Williams in memory of her daughter Dawn.

Please help us help others. Make a LOVE GIFT today. Tax deductible Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O Carol Cavin 214 E Hansen Ct, Independence, MO 64055

**UPCOMING EVENT:
41ST TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE
JULY 27 - JULY 29**



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the 41st TCF National Conference on July 27-29, 2018. "Gateway to Hope and Healing" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. We'll keep you updated with details on the national website www.compassionatefriends.org, our website at www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org as well as on our chapter TCF Facebook page and TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

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.