



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Jan-Feb 2017

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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 still here.

First snow, 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

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

*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

It's So Cold

It's so cold.
I went to the cemetery today.
50 below wind chill.
After two and a half years
I thought I was more used to this,
But I wasn't as "healed" as I thought.
Your little place in the cemetery
So alone...So cold
I wanted to stretch out on your grave,
Cover you with my body,
Protect you from the cold.
I could almost imagine
what your voice would sound like,
"I'm so cold, mama."
Nothing I can do to protect you.
Helpless, hopeless, despair.
Logically, I tell myself this is foolish,
you feel no cold.
Motherly, I ache to protect you.
It's so cold today.
I'm sorry Catie, I'm sorry.

--Mary VanBockern, TCF, Sioux Falls

When It Is Dark Enough, You Can See the Stars

Often it is easiest to see the stars in the long, cold nights of winter. People who have come through any kind of life threatening event—a crash, a tornado, a severe illness, the loss of a loved one —speak of how it has changed their perspective, how it's easier to see what's important.

Several years after our daughter died, we experienced a burglary. All of our wedding silver was stolen, as well as antique pieces that had been handed down through many generations. Of course we were upset. But right away the words came to me: "It's only things." I have no way of knowing whether or not I'd have been this calm if the theft occurred before her death, but I suspect not.

The stars are not only clearer, but more beautiful. Ancient navigators found their way through the seas by looking at the stars. So maybe the experience of loss not only helps clarify what is important to us, but also helps us know where we are and the direction in which we want to go.

--Charles Beard

A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you know 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

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 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

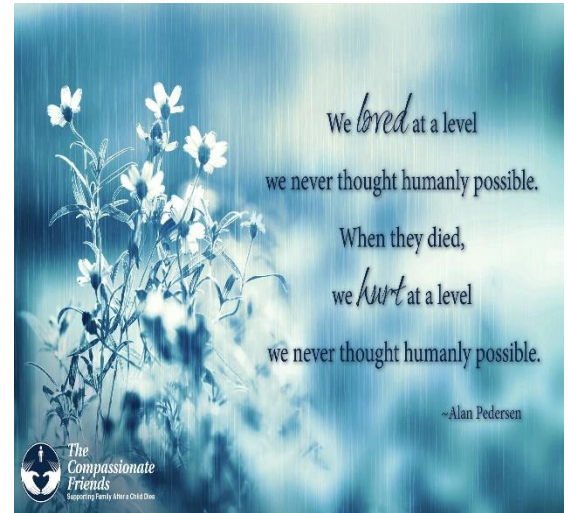
And laughs deep in the belly
to cleanse us of our mortal sadness.
--Judy Gradford, Rochester NY TCF

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"

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

**May Love be what you remember
the most!**
Darcie Sims

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

Love Never Goes Away

“Why does it hurt so much?
Why is this grief so
incapacitating? If only the hurt
weren’t so crushing.” Sounds
familiar? All of us have known
hurts before, but none of our
previous “ouches” can compare
with the hurt we feel. Nothing can
touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have
discovered that the sun still comes
up. We still have to function. We
did not die when our child died,
even though we wish we could
have, so...we are stuck with this
pain, this grief. What do we do
with it? Surely we can’t live like
THIS forever! There are no magic
formulas for surviving grief.
There are a few recognized
patterns for grief, but even those
are only guidelines. What we do
know is that the emptiness will
never go away. It will become
tolerable and livable...some day.

TIME...the longest word in
our grief. We used to measure
TIME by the steps of our child
...the first word, first tooth, first
date, first car....Now we don’t
have that measure anymore. All
we have is TIME, and it only
seems to make the hurt worse. So
what do we do? Give ourselves
TIME...to hurt, to grieve, to cry.

TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to
be “crazy,” TIME to remember.

Be nice to yourself! Don’t
measure your progress through grief
against anyone else’s. Be your own
timekeeper. Don’t push. Eventually,
you will find the hours and days of
grief have turned to minutes and
then moments...but don’t expect
them to go away. You will always
hurt. You don’t get over grief...it
only becomes tolerable and livable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead
of dwelling on how much you lost,
try thinking of how much you had.
Try letting good memories come
over you as easily as the awful ones
do. We didn’t lose our
child...HE/SHE DIED. We don’t
lose the love that flowed between
us...it still flows, but differently
now.

Does it help to know that if we
didn’t love so very much, it would
not hurt so badly? Grief is the price
we pay for love. And as much as it
hurts, I’m very glad I loved. Don’t
let death cast ugly shadows, but
rather warm memories of the loving
times you shared. Even though death
comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY

--Darcie D. Sims

TIME does not touch
the firmament of stars
with a simplicity
of days and nights and years.
The rhythm of this smallness
we call earth
is only a whisper among galaxies?
Beyond the measured years which
rise and fall beyond the calendars
of human time and place,
the meaning of this smallness
we call life will find us
somewhere in eternity.

“For You From Sascha” by Sascha Wagner

“Watch diligently...
for each day comes
bearing its own gifts,
but you must un-tie the ribbons.”

Sorrow

It hurts deep down inside.
One feels diminished,
less than we have been.
Empty, bereft –
forlorn and incomplete.
Sorrow is a painful word,
but if someone is there
to share the feeling,
it becomes endurable
and in the scheme of things
a time of being
that includes great emotion
and thus a time of closeness,
growing and becoming someone
more than we have been before.

--Shirley Holzer Jeffrey, “Louie” chptr,
in Death: The Final Stage of Growth
by Elisabeth Kubler Ross

Healing...Unobserved

I used to wonder why I always felt like
crying when leaving a support group.
Then one night I left and it felt as though
a great load had been lifted from my
inner being. For the first time in several
years my surroundings came alive. I
observed the twinkling of stars and
brightness of the moon. I heard the
crunching of snow beneath my boots
and paused to watch a rabbit darting to
and fro in the twilight. Is this the
beginning of healing or has it been
there—slowly and desperately with
great persistence—trying to emerge
from beneath the greatest of sorrows and
pain? Maybe tomorrow...I will make a
snow angel!

--Nancy A Gleim, “From the Heart of Samantha”

Not An Easy Word

Hope is not an easy word for grievers—
but we, more than most others,
need to understand
what hope can mean for us.
Hope means finding the strength
to live with grief.
Hope means nurturing with grace
the joy of remembrance.
Hope means embracing
with tenderness and pride
our own life and the gifts left to us
by those we have lost.

--Sascha Wagner

A Dozen Roses

If I had a dozen roses, I know just
what I'd do—

I'd give each one a name that
reminded me of you.

The first rose I'd name sunshine,
'cause you brighten every day.

The second would be beauty,
the kind that never goes away.

The third one would be priceless,
like those hugs you gave to me.

I'd name the fourth rose silly—
oh how funny you could be.

Rose five of course is patience,
something you have helped me find.

The sixth rose I'd call memories,
precious gifts you left behind.

The seventh and eighth roses would be
faith and grace.

Nine would be unique, because no one
can take your place.

The tenth rose, well that's easy, I'd
simply name it love.

Eleven I'd call angel; I know you
watch from above.

I'd think about the twelfth rose and
really take my time—

After all, these roses are for you, my
Valentine.

I'm sending them to heaven in every
color that I know,

So number twelve I'll name forever;
that's how long I'll love you so.

--Alan Pedersen,

www.everashleymusic.com

There's 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
of heartbroken fathers and mothers.

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 living message
printed clear

in not only this month's
Valentine,

but all those throughout
the year.

--Mary Cleckley

Some Quiet Valentines

While watching an evening sunset
fade in the western skies,
we know that when tomorrow
dawns,

from the east the sun will rise.

Although it may be hidden
by veils hanging low,
we're sure it will appear again
and we'll feel its warming glow.

And so it is with life,
when seen through misty eyes,
when our world is suddenly dimmed
and we plead and ask those why's.

It is then we learn, "no one is an
island,"

as someone wisely said,
as we travel life's uncharted course
and by an unknown hand seem led.

We walk that path of sorrow,
enduring life's great loss,
but by some chance or fate
someone's

path we are guided to cross.
That someone through kindness
in his or her way does impart
a warmth and a tenderness
that so lift a sad heart.

For it's the depth of their smile
that lifts this sorrow of mine,
and by far they are best suited
to be our Valentine.

We may be someone's
Valentine
and never be aware,
in these caring, still grieving
hearts,
our children's love is there.

We've no choice but to
continue
on life's uncharted way,
and be thankful for those quiet
friends
who brighten up each day.

--from the
Cleveland, OH, TCF newsletter



Love Gifts

We are very grateful for donations
received from:

- Carol Simpson through Brent Lilly Agency of American Family Insurance in memory of her son Jeffrey-James Simpson
- Billie Ashton in memory of her daughter Mistyka

TCF depends on your generous contributions

in memory of our dead children.

Our activities support the grief work of
many families and
efforts to educate members of
our community about the
grief process and how they can
support bereaved parents.

Please help us help others by making a LOVE GIFT today.

Tax deductible Love Gifts
may be sent to:

**TCF, P.O. Box 2204, Independence, MO
64055.**

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, P.O. Box 2204, Independence, MO
64055 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.**