 Jan – Feb 2022

 **Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips TCF National Headquarters**

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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. Wearied 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 first-hand 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*

**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 Workday!

*--Mary Valazquez, Warrington, PA*

**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,, Palm Beach, FL*

###### 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*

**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, 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*

**New Year’s Day**

Twelve days from now

Will be the date Amy slipped away.

Six years, four months, twelve days

Since Sarah left to play.

Among the clouds and stars,

In heaven’s realm they wait

For Mom and Dad to join them

Inside the pearly gates.

What joyous times await us

When we meet with our girls!

We’ll hug and love and kiss them

Running fingers though dark curls.

For now, each day eternity

As we mark time until

Our aching hearts and crying eyes

Will stop, if it’s God’s will.

No fireworks or parties

As this year finally ends.

The next year comes to struggle through,

Thank God for family and friends.

-- *Barbara Batson South Kansas City*

**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*

**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 windchill.

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*

###### 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…someday.

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 itonly 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.

*by Sascha Wagner*

**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*

**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*



**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*

The most beautiful people

we have known are those

who have known defeat,

known suffering, known struggle,

known loss,

and have found their way

out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation,

a sensitivity and an understanding

of life that fills them

with compassion, gentleness,

and a deep loving concern.

Beautiful people do not just happen.

*--Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*

**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*

**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. 



# “That Room” becomes Home

The setting is a little strange. “That Room” is longer than it is square. The chairs are in an oblong circle, boxes of tissue are strategically placed. Someone has made coffee and there are brownies or a cake—and all the pictures.

Sometimes you will walk into “that room” feeling as weak as a kitten, and sometimes as strong as a bull. No matter how you’re feeling when you see all those chairs, you think: “It’s not possible; there can’t be that many people who feel the way I feel!” But little by little you watch the chairs fill in.

It’s like being at your house with company, EXCEPT this room is a safe haven. You feel secure, and there’s a warm feeling in the room— the comfort of being accepted. Here, you won’t be judged by other people. It is safe to take off your mask and let your feelings show, to share your thoughts.

Here you get an understanding smile and feel the comfort of a “meant” hug—the warmth of someone who really wants to know how you are doing, instead of asking: “Are you still dealing with this?” or “You’re still going to those meetings?”

Here, you are accepted for the person you have become. You don’t hear: “I liked the old you better,” or “I want the old you back,” or “You’re not any fun anymore.” In “that room” they understand the “new” you who has survived the WORST thing life can hand a person.

Before you know it, “that room” is more comfortable than any place you can think of. I’ve been walking into this room for 12½ years now, and it is full of people who know me better and are closer to me than my own family. They became my “new” friends, my “new” family. What I have learned and shared with my new family has changed the pain I carry. They taught me how to put my life back together, how to go on.

I will always miss my beautiful daughter Sara; I will never forget her, and yes, my life will go on.

“That room” has become home. I want to thank all of you for being here when I needed you the most! Thank you for being here now; I couldn’t have done this journey without you! See you next month!

*--Mardy Burns, Independence MO*

**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*

**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*

**Mark your calendar for this upcoming event:**

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**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*](http://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 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.*