



The Compassionate Friends

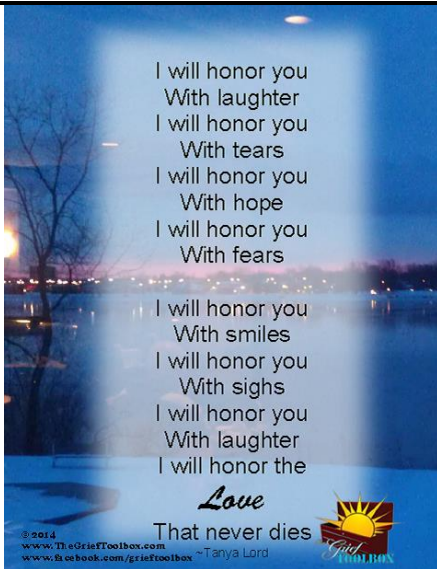
Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July - August 2018

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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

The Sun Will Shine

I sat in the darkness in the living room, for dawn was only just arriving. Through the picture window I watched the trees slowly outline the opposite shore of our little lake. Then magically, a warm shaft of light appeared behind the trees, flooding the horizon with gold. "It will be a beautiful day for our picnic," I thought.

But as the daylight grew stronger, I saw that a thick, gray fog blanketed the lake and the lawn between it and the house. "Oh, no," I moaned, "I was so hoping for good weather." Then a ball of fire peeked over the horizon and rose majestically into full view. Within an hour it had burned off the mist, and the picnic day emerged bright and clear under the cloudless sky.

Life is like this, I thought, when grief ... darkens our days. It is then we must keep hope burning in our hearts. We must believe that if the sun is not shining at the moment, it will shine again, and we will have a richer appreciation of the bright days for having experienced the darkness.

--Madeline Robinson, Twin Lakes WI

Summerwind

*The one who owns this summer is
not here,
not here to know the tender
summerwind,
not here to share the glowing and
the song.*

*The one who owns this summer did
not live
to touch the richness of this day,
this day in summer when you are
alone.*

*Weep to the summer wind,
weep and love again
the one you remember.*

July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
Brilliant colors in the sky.
Their splendor ends in seconds
On this evening in July.
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"
I whisper with a sigh.
She was born this month,
She loved this month,
And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
Glowing briefly in the dark
They are gone too soon, and so was
she—

Having been, and left her mark,
A glorious, incandescent life.
A catalyst, a spark...
Her being gently lit my path
And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death
Of my happy summer child
Marked a life too brief that ended
Without rancor, without guile.
Like the fireworks that leave images
On unprotected eyes...
Her lustrous life engraved my heart...
With love that never dies.

--Sally Migliaccio, Long Island, NY

From Sascha Wagner:

Summer Soon...

Sunlight dancing on the branches
Of the birch tree at my door.
Meadow stretching smug and lazy,
Darker, greener than before.

Wind as warm as hugging children,
Clouds so round and very close--
And on one small grave there trembles
Lovingly an early rose.

August

This summer runs to harvest—Do you
ask

How could a harvest be without my
child?

Friend, someday soon
the harvest in your life
will bring you home and wealth,
from love remembered.

Finding the Sweeter Side of Grief-A Look At Child Loss Ten Years Later

So, July 16, 2018 marks ten years since our car accident. -when a routine commute to work on a hot summer day, ended with my daughter gone and my son and I in the hospital.

I remember clearly when it was nearly evening time that day and we were finally allowed to leave the hospital. I was heavily bandaged from shoulder to wrist, dressed in a grey sweat suit, and sent out the door with an army of prescriptions to aid in my pain and grief. As they wheeled me out of the room, into the lobby were fountains of people waiting inside and out, standing room only. Coworkers, friends, strangers, even my brother's childhood best friend was there. I felt like an exhibit at the zoo, on display with all eyes on me. I bowed my head unable to look up, ashamed and guilt ridden, in complete disbelief. A horrifying start to the new phase of my life.

Ten years. A decade. Oh my gosh, excuse me while I try to catch my breath. I am having a hard time believing that it has actually been that long since Lydia died. My strawberry blonde, confident and beautiful sassy pants 5-year-old little girl has been in heaven for ten years now. It's sort of scary really and sometimes it feels like a dream. How can I possibly have lived that long, drudging through life for ten years in these cement boots?

Reluctantly, I looked into the mirror days after the accident and didn't recognize the woman staring back at me. She was a stranger. Who was I? A terrible mother? All sense of identity and normalcy was stripped away instantly, leaving me just a shell of a person with nothing left inside. The thought of drinking myself into oblivion to escape my new reality, I have to admit was very appealing, however I was terribly fearful I would lose control and wouldn't be able to stop. So, after one day of margaritas, I quit.

My incapacitated self-had no motivation for anything and was glued to the couch in a daze. I never moved, days went by and I hadn't showered in almost a week. My best friend came over and gave me a bath. Imprisoned by guilt, I lived in the dark back corner of my closet, shielded by my hanging clothes, which offered strange sense of security. It was there, where buckets of tears were released where no one could see or hear me.

Regret remained in the forefront of my mind for quite some time. The record of my last moments with her, the trip to Disneyland we never took, the vivid yet suffocating reality of no first day of school, no more dance recitals, no proms, no more shopping dates, no wedding, etc. The No's were endless.

My future had been destroyed.

Suddenly, nothing mattered anymore. I had failed. Failed to protect my most prized

possession. Failed horribly as a mother. I was at the bottom of the food chain.

I had to learn to live again yet life as I knew it had ended. The darkness surrounded me, the trauma and flashbacks consumed me, haunting me for years. Every breath was a challenge. Perspectives changed to where getting up off the couch to get a glass of water was monumental, and finally not burning the toast and sleeping for more than 3 hours straight became something to celebrate.

I couldn't make sense of it. Why did this happen to MY family? Things like this never happened to people I know, let alone MY family. It wasn't supposed to be this way.

How could I live again, and was I even going to be able to? These were questions I asked myself over and over again. Was I being punished? Did I trust God? Did He hate me? Did Lydia hate me? Why did He allow this to happen? My faith had been tested to the end. How could He do this to me? Why? WHY? Like a broken record, my thoughts and unending demand for answers played incessantly in my mind, yet none would come.

I had heard stories of others who were told to give God the glory in times of weakness. Praise God? Seriously? In my situation, how could someone even think of doing such a thing? It was the last thing from my mind, completely weighed down in utter devastation, yet scripture so boldly states, praise Him. Does He know how I feel? Praise the Lord and give thanks. Thanks for what? For letting my daughter die? What was there to learn in this?

However, when the phone quit ringing, when friends stopped coming by, I found I was alone. ALL ALONE and it was unspeakably frightening. Everyone had moved on and no one could relate to my experience or had any inkling as to what I was going through. Left with no other way out of my grief, I knew I needed to uncover and bring to the surface the faith buried deep within me. I would not survive this without God. And he was such a loving God. I was desperate and grasping at any sliver of hope I could find, eventually realizing He was my only hope.

Circumstances, pain, confusion, and sorrow engulfed my soul. Completely broken and alone, what did I have to lose? Down on my knees in my bedroom in the dark of night I surrendered. I had nothing left. Sobbing uncontrollably barely able to catch my breath, I prayed for Him to rid me of this pain, forgive me, give me hope, and give me strength to endure the future. So, I praised Him hesitantly with tears while whispering out loud, "Thank you Lord for all the blessings in my life." Thanks be to God. I needed to humble myself, and "I will praise Him" became my daily mantra. And I did, thanking Him for my family, my children, and for bringing me to a place of such brokenness that I was unable to put myself back together. It was at this point where I conceded myself and

allowed Him to have full control over my life. I put my hope and my trust in Him. Only God could restore this brokenness.

The guilt, shame and pain were incredibly heavy and arduous load to carry, becoming increasingly unbearable day after day. I turned to my Bible, opening the pages of a book I had often let sit unopened, but always close by. The Word became my friend, and in my weakness, He became my only strength.

In the midst of loss, especially when it is new, taking one breath at a time is often all we can do. As time would go on, I would somehow learn to manage the intense grief and pain, miraculously and subconsciously training myself to live with the "new normal." I never wanted a "new normal." I wanted my old life back.

To those who knew me before 7/16/08, I thought I was unstoppable. I was confident and outspoken, a career focused and fun seeking woman.

In all honesty, let's just say in my early 20's, you would find me, a free-spirited, social director reigning the title of beer drinking champion, planning the next event. Living up my independence, every day was packed full of friends and round the clock activities. I never turned down and opportunity for an adventure, squeezing school and work in when I could. My zest for life continued through my late 20's.

When I became a mom in 2002, life slowed down a bit, but I continued on my self-absorbed path, keeping up with the Jones'. I loved being a mother, don't get me wrong. Lydia was the love of my life. I never knew how full my heart could be, yet I still did not perceive the enormity of the gift of being a mother.

Looking back, the years did scream by terribly fast but not at first. My 20's were grand, full of excitement and adventure, spontaneity and determination. It was full of confidence, friends, graduations, weddings, parties and new beginnings. And then the decade of the 30's arrived, and only one year into them, at 31, tragedy struck, and my life was instantaneously shattered into a million pieces, leaving me feeling like a helpless child. When Lydia died, I lost everything. I had no direction, no purpose, and no motivation for life. My existence had been reduced to crumbs.

And after 7/16/08- Well, it's been awful. It's been great. It's been terrorizing at times, yet it's been beautiful as well.

Weird. I know.

I didn't know what I had until I lost it. How many times have we heard that deep-rooted cliché? Those few powerful words pack so much meaning. As for anything, we don't really fully understand the value of what we have until it is gone. So true.

I feel invisible sometimes and long for the person I used to be. Yet, I strangely welcome who I have become. I persevered and fought through those first years of "firsts." I powered through the guilt of my first smile

since she died, her first birthday, every visit to Starbucks without her, the overwhelming jealousy seeing others with complete families, the continued dance sign ups in the mail, and so much more.

Amidst the pain and sorrow, I first felt a faint sense of inner peace, slowly growing more prevalent in my heart, allowing me to know deep within that somehow God would make this alright. It took relinquishing control to Him, trusting that He would carry me through. I knew I couldn't do this on my own.

I'm happy, but also sad. I'm so blessed yet broken inside. I've learned to balance these delicate feelings of grief and sorrow that ambush me at moment's notice, while still being able to experience amazing joy and gifts of each new day.

Not one day goes by where I don't think about her. Her presence is missed on every holiday and family gathering. The inevitable empty chair makes itself known. Even today on occasion, I avoid social functions, baby showers, church, graduations, and birthday parties. And that's okay. I have learned what works for me, where I fit comfortably and what my limitations are.

I'm still as forgetful as I was that first year. I have never recovered from this and seem to have gotten worse. So, I apologize in advance if I forgot to return your call or text, or email. I'm sure I read it and replied to you in my mind. Please be persistent and patient with me.

I don't cry every night, or every month for that matter. My grief comes and goes, here one day, gone for months until a song, a smell, a place, a photo or something else transports me back to that familiar day. But my smiles far outweigh my sorrow.

Questions like "how many children to you have?" aren't paralyzing and uncomfortable anymore. They are welcomed, as they provide me an opportunity to share my daughter. To talk about Lydia brings me more joy than anything else.

I've learned to take off that mask of "I'm okay," and be authentic to myself and others. This is real life and they get the real me. I've learned that it's okay to cry through church and embrace those pure emotions, moments that touch my soul.

I've learned to manage my anxiety and panic attacks, recognizing and combatting them with God's word. I carry Lydia in my heart and have her special items placed throughout my home. Her artwork is framed on the wall, her bottle of High School Musical perfume sits on my bathroom counter, her photo next to my bed, her favorite princess blanket draped over the couch, and so many others. She is always with me and will always be my daughter and I her mom.

Perspective is what keeps me going. Eternal perspective. Imagining my darling daughter dancing with Jesus, joyful and in complete bliss. Nothing makes me happier. Knowing what awaits us all after we depart

this world, is something we must treasure and eagerly anticipate.

The fog has lifted. The me who lived a decade ago is not here anymore. Not sure where she went but, an older and wiser me has evolved. I know what's really important in life. I've learned about forgiveness and generosity, perseverance and deep love. And I've finally figured out how I like to eat my eggs- (scrambled), and that my favorite time of day is just at twilight when the sun it sets. The sky is illuminated in a magnificent light that amplifies the spectacular rainbow of colors, bringing peace to my soul.

Now, as I look at the reflection in the mirror, I see a woman who hasn't taken her necklace off in ten years, the one with the silver pendant of her daughter's last thumbprint with her name engraved in the back. I see a woman who feels old as the creases on my face get more prevalent. I feel exhausted, and deeply scarred. Yet on the contrary, I also see someone who is strong, full of faith and is a thriving survivor of life's most horrific circumstances, whose direction in life has been made clear. A lady seasoned on the lessons of grief, a heart bursting with love for others, who has found the secret to surviving child loss.

The most important thing I've learned in the past ten years, is that if we allow Him, God will turn our grief, sorrow, and anger into something so beautiful. The trauma, the flashbacks of that horrific moment, were like stabbing pains directly through my heart, over and over again, hour after hour, day after day, penetrating my core, for years. Yet, beneath all the pain was a tiny spark of hope that I was determined to uncover. As I reached for the light that I could just barely see, He gently brushed away what kept it hidden, and slowly He began to strengthen me, mold me, and refine all that He created in me. What He has clearly shown me in this process is that through recognizing His work in our own lives, God is able to give us the ability to see others in a different light, with a heart full of compassion. Finding meaning, and living fully with passion and purpose, is what life is all about. It's unfortunate that it often takes us being broken and at rock bottom, before we can see the light through the cracks. But, my God is faithful, full of mercy, and His love is immeasurable.

No one is exempt from tragedy and loss. No one is exempt from accidents or mistakes. Guilt, regret, and shame do not have to haunt us. I made a choice-a choice to find hope. It didn't matter anymore how she died, but how she lived and how she is still living on in heaven. I learned to gently let go of those things that weighed so heavily on me, slowly removing the blanket that once enveloped me. Although scary, I was able to get through it by clinging to my faith. He works miracles and is the only one who has the power to bring amazing beauty out of total devastation.

For now, when I feel that time is just rushing by way too fast, I try to slow down

to read those books to my children, to play games, pick ugly flowers that they think are beautiful, explore and appreciate the sloppy kisses, silly questions, fantastic indiscernible artwork, sassy attitudes, teenage arguments and make ample time for the simple things, learning that a little gratitude goes a long way. I've learned to embrace my unorganized, chaotic and messy life, making room for what really matters.

The scars on my arm have forever marked me providing me a daily reminder of my difficult journey, dividing my life into "before and after." Something that I will carry with me always. Presently, I have no idea what tomorrow will bring, however, I know I'm equipped to handle whatever life throws at me.

So, my advice to you all, if I can do this, so can you.

I pray you find that sparkle of hope seeping through your darkness and come to see the Lord is our strength and faithfully carries our burdens. In time, He reveals a striking world, a slow dance exposing the wonders of life, teaching us to appreciate and see Him, and to see this life we've been given from His perspective and not our own. Remember, God's got this!

I have experienced the worst and at times still, relive those gut-wrenching soul-killing sobs and accompanied sharp pains. However, instead of that initial blanket of hopelessness, these intimate moments are followed by an overwhelming peace that embraces me, bringing comfort and healing. This is the gift of grief.

I can honestly say that having lived through the trauma of the death of my child, my eyes have been opened to a new world. Initially, it was the world full of sadness and unending pain. It was struggling with heavy doubt and perpetual what ifs.

However, as the days and years progressed, slowly I began to evolve, hatching from my cocoon inviting flickers of hope into my life and soon, they out shadowed the darkness. I found myself smiling more and counted the days in between the tears. Progress was being made. My faith was growing, and glimmers of joy were blooming inside me. I began to forego the judgmental self of previous days, learning to appreciate the struggles of others, understanding full well that each one of us is fighting a silent inner battle.

However, ten years later, it has evolved into a world of deep introspect and life lessons. Grief is constantly developing and growing my heart of compassion while pruning my spirit and blossoming my faith.

Grief causes you to become authentic to yourself as you walk that fine line between past and present, delicately balancing the dynamic emotions that flood your soul, while reflecting on yesterday and pondering what the future holds.

I have learned that I cannot only survive this but can thrive. It humbles me to know that without grief, my life would have been

entirely different, and I would not be the same person I have become today. For that I am grateful.

Well, what's another 10? Bring it on. Every day is one day closer to my reunion with my little girl. Thinking of all of you grieving hearts and sending prayers of peace and love. Hang on-hope is just around the corner.

*Daphne Bach Greer
Grieving Gumdrops-The Sweeter side of Grief
Blog*

Summer Breezes

There's a hint of girlish laughter
Wafting past the porch.
For a moment I pause to listen.
In the warmth of summer sun
Memories are to bask in.
Trees you climbed, kites you flew,
Bikes you raced,
Waves you splashed in.
At night we wrapped time around us
As we blanketed the grass
And gazed toward heaven.
The stars were full of wonder then,
And lazy days seemed endless.
Life spread before you,
Laughter filling the wind with
happiness.
Just now I thought I heard you
once again.
How pleasant this breath of summer?
The breezes hold such memories
Of life, of you.

--Karen Nelson, Box Elder County, UT

When you walk through a storm,
keep your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark,
At the end of the storm is a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a
lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed and
blown.
Walk on, walk on,
with hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone...
You'll never walk alone.

*--"You'll Never Walk Alone"
by Oscar Hammerstein II*

I Feel the Joy

Never let there be a time when
I cannot feel the pain
When hurt and sadness are blocked out,
And only numbness reigns.
At least with pain I am alive
But numbness will destroy
For if I cannot feel the pain,
Then I cannot feel the joy.

--Joanetta Hendel, TCF, Indianapolis

Time is the passing of moments lived
one at a time. Our recovery depends
on what we do with each moment. We
cannot sit back and say "TIME will
heal me."

TIME is merely the movement of the
clock.

Our successful return to comfortable
living is what we do while the clock is
moving.

We have to look at the beauty left us
in life instead of what we no longer
have.

We must find reasons to go on.
--Margaret Gerner, TCF St. Louis MO



I don't know why... I'll never know why...

I don't have to know why...

I don't like it... I don't have to like it...
What I do have to do is make a choice about
my living.

What I do want to do is accept it and go on
living.

The choice is mine.

I can go on living, valuing every moment
in a way I never did before.

Or I can be destroyed by it and, in turn,
destroy others.

I thought I was immortal,
that my children and my family were also,
that tragedy happens only to others.

I know now that life is tenuous and
valuable.

I choose to go on living,
making the most of the time I have.
And valuing my family and friends
in a way I never experienced before.

--Iris Bolton, TCF, North Atlanta

Where Do I Go?

Now that you're gone, where do I go
to see your fair smile
to hear your tinkling giggle

to smell your damp hair after a swim
to listen to your questions
to touch your gentle cheek
to feel your bear hug?

Where do I go
to share all my years of wisdom
to find someone who'll tell me the truth
to answer the phone that won't ring
to tell you I'm sorry
to know that I am loved and
to pour out my love and my tears?

I shall go
to the pictures that hold you forever
to the books we shared
to the music you taught me to love
to the woods we explored as one
to the memories that never fail
to the innermost reaches of my heart
to where we are always together.

--Marcia Alig, TCF, Mercer, NJ

The Lonely Attic

There's a private part of me no one can
enter.

A place of sadness, pain and memories.
On special days of peace, I'll find
myself there.

And the moments of my laughter fade
away.

This place will be a part of me forever.
And the peaceful days will never be
secure,

As in solitude I drift into the attic,
and feel the loneliness no one can share.

--Cathryn Haywood

I Feel the Joy

Never let there be a time when
I cannot feel the pain

When hurt and sadness are blocked out,
And only numbness reigns.
At least with pain I am alive
But numbness will destroy
For if I cannot feel the pain,
Then I cannot feel the joy.

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My Sister

By Kim Bernal TCF, Sugar Land-Southwest
Houston, TX

I am not sure where to start. My older sister, Lezlie, died on October 1, 1997. It has been a little more than Four months and I still catch my breath and start to tear up when someone mentions her name. I am a private griever, I guess. When I heard the news that she was in the ER, I fell to my knees and prayed to God. I told Him I was going to put this in His hands and that it was up to Him now, as if it was not earlier. "She did not make it." These are the words that I heard my father say through a cloud of tears and pain. While holding my mother, he explained that she was gone. My immediate reaction was to cry. I really did not know what this would mean. I am slowly finding out just what it does. What do we do now? I wanted to take immediate action, calling relatives, the minister, and helping in a time when my parents needed someone to lean on. I was bound and determined to be the strong one for a while. And I was. As we made funeral arrangements and memorial plans, I, like the rest of them, sat in silence as the tears and pain flowed from my eyes. It hurt. But I was determined to remain strong for my children and for my family who seemed to be crumbling right before my very eyes. A very difficult thing to do for a little girl who thinks her daddy is the strongest person she has ever known. I dreaded the viewing at the funeral home. I did not want to go to the funeral home and see her like that, not even one last time. My parents insisted it would be a good thing for all of us. As the time approached, I was more and more frustrated at the prospect of falling apart upon seeing her. However, as we entered the funeral home and went into the room where her body lay at rest, something happened. I could not shed a

tear. It was as if my brain and body (and soul, for that matter) went on autopilot. I sat quietly in the first row watching my father fall to his knees and sob. My mother could not speak. My baby sister holding on to them both, in tears. I was on the outside looking in on the strangest and yet saddest heartbreaking moment of my life. But that's just it: I was on the outside looking in. I was the strong one, but not by choice. I did not consciously decide to lock out my feelings and, yet, the entire episode was painful. I can't explain my reaction. I went through the memorial service with minimal tears. I greeted those wishing to personally offer condolences because I know my family was struggling with having to look them in the eyes and share their pain along with their own. But then I saw my friend, Julie. Julie has survived through the same experience I am going through. The key word is survived. As I hugged her, my strength lapsed, and I started to cry, sort of uncontrollably. This was good. Julie told me that "things are never going to get better." I thought to myself, what a terrible thing to say to someone in my circumstance, but she was right. Her honesty now is appreciated. She was right. Things will never get better, we just learn to handle and cope. I am grateful for her kindness and friendship. We belong to a club that I hope no one will ever have to join. We have lost a piece of ourselves and our family will never be the same. This is a permanent state. I still cry. I am able to get through a conversation using her name without crying, well, at least sometimes. But there are times, I call them "moments of truth," that I am starting to experience. The first occurred on December 1, 1997. I was sitting having lunch with my coworkers. We were not talking about anything related to my loss but all of a sudden, I blurted out, "Oh, my God, it's been two months since my sister died." I had to get up and run. It's odd, I seem to have this need to get up and bolt frequently. I mostly control it and move on to something else, but the urge is still present and strong. There are songs, music, books, and a little newsletter published by The Compassionate Friends that will bring me to uncontrolled grieving. I sit and hold my children as I totally let go of all the pent-up pain and sadness. It's funny, I have remained strong for them and in my weakest moments they are all I hold on to. Anyway, these "moments of truth"

come frequently. The closest analogy I can think of to explain this whole experience is that I am like a child whose nose is pressed up against the window pane of life when all of a sudden, the window shatters. I am so busy trying to pick up the pieces to protect the others and insure that no one else gets hurt that I do not realize until much later that my arms and hands are bleeding heavily. I can finally see the devastation and now feel the pain.

*In memory of Lezlie Dyane Davis
June 7, 1966 to October 1, 1997*

Beach Havens

As the tide of grief goes down,
New beaches are revealed.
Their sand, it's true, is wet,
And barnacles protrude.
But wear your rubber shoes
(hot pink would be preferred).
Step dainty on the shore:
A storm-thrown log will give you rest.
Now sit and sun yourself,
And dream of those you love.

*--Cathy Sosnowsky, TCF
North Shore, North Vancouver BC*

When darkness seems
overwhelming,
light a candle in someone's life
and see how it makes the
darkness
in your own and
the other person's life flee.

--Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

You Are Not Alone

We know the heartache that you bear
We've felt the pain 'cause we've
been there
We share a bond of infinite sorrow
A hope for peace, strength for
tomorrow.
A time will come when you'll seek
relief
Solace and comfort to ease your
grief.
We welcome you, we shall be there
We understand. We've much to
share.

--TCF Scranton, Pennsylvania

Please don't tell me it's time to let go. This grief is a friend, a palpable presence, a feeling so real I can almost touch it and almost see it.

It comes without warning from somewhere or nowhere for any odd reason or no reason at all. I have learned to accept this unthinkable friend no longer my enemy, no longer hell neither raging nor crushing no longer a vicious malevolent beast with vacuous eyes threatening my very existence. This grief is a vague gentle ache always there, a longing that gnaws at the edge of my soul. It haunts me in stillness of dark endless nights and long summer days in winter's harsh cold and in soft autumn haze.

In echoes of laughter and fragments of song in a voice now stilled that I hear in a dream. In a young man ambling alone in my mind in some other place and some other time.

This grief is a part of my journey through life a bewildering journey I can't understand, and I cannot let go. This grief is my friend.

--Tommy's mom, Bereavement Publishing, Inc.
(Thomas A Dewire Jr., 4/10/65-7/12/95)

The Grieving Process

Grief is a normal response to loss. But because most of us experience it deeply only a few times in our lives, it can be frightening and confusing. Grief is a powerful and sometimes overwhelming experience. It has both emotional and physical effects on us.

Because grief is such a personal process, there is no "right way" to grieve. The important thing is to allow our feelings to flow and to talk—talk with someone who really listens and allows us the time we need to talk or cry. "Being strong" can only make matters more difficult.

To grieve is like suddenly being pushed into a cold and swiftly flowing river in which there are rapids, rocks, logs, and other submerged objects. As we are carried along in the current, we bump into things in the river. Some of them hurt a lot and some are just annoying. Just as no two persons floating in a river will bump into the exact same things, no two people who grieve will experience exactly the same things. If we do the work of grief, we will be able to swim to the bank and climb out of the river.

The Gift of Tears

Persons who are grieving often find crying disturbing. Many times, much effort goes into "not showing" the pain, or in judging tears and crying to be signs of weakness. "Adults don't cry in public!" "Big boys (and men) don't cry!" "I wish I wasn't so emotional!" "She's holding up so well!" These are merely a few ways that our society devalues the gift of tears.

It might be helpful if we understood that **tears are merely another form of language.** Tears are the first form of language that we used upon entering this world. It is only the heartless individual who could ignore the cries of an infant or child. In our adult life we often shed tears when what we have to say is beyond the scope of ordinary language. Maybe tears are God's gift to us when we cannot adequately express what we feel.

—Sr. Marilyn Welch,
Hospice Foundation of America

Love Gifts

We are very grateful for donation received from:

Grace Cherry in memory of her two sons, Wayne Curtis Cherry (3/5/60-4/24/98) and Donald Lee Cherry (9/7/56-6/16 2012).

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

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. To register for the event and Hotel registration go to 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.



Our Sixth Annual Walk to Remember will be held September 15, 2018 At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass Pro) In Independence, MO Registration will begin at 8:30 am Walk will begin at 9 am Please watch for future emails and/or check the website www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org for preregistration and t-shirt order information.

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.**