



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May-June 2025

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

TCF National Headquarters
48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393
Website: www.compassionatefriends.org
(877)969-0010

Upcoming Event:



For more information go to
www.compassionatefriends.org for
more information.



Our Annual Walk to Remember
will be held September 20, 2025
At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass
Pro) In Independence, MO
Registration will begin at 8:30 am
The walk will begin at 9 am.

Grief is not a moment.

It doesn't fade simply because time moves forward.
Instead, it lingers. It reshapes. It becomes a quiet companion for those who have lost someone they love. The world often expects grief to have an expiration date—as if it should eventually disappear—but the truth is, loss doesn't just take a person. It takes pieces of the life that once existed, rewriting the very foundation of who you are. When someone is gone, the world does not stop. Time marches on. People carry on. Seasons change.

But for those left behind, everything shifts.

The places once filled with their laughter now echo with absence. The moments once shared now feel incomplete.

It's not just their absence that's mourned—it's the loss of what was, and the loss of what could have been. Some may ask, "Are you still grieving?"

Others may never ask at all, choosing instead to ignore the elephant in the room, pretending nothing happened.

It's as if the passage of time should somehow lessen the weight of the love that once existed.

But grief cannot be outrun, nor can it be measured by a calendar.

It is woven into the fabric of the soul—a reflection of the depth of love that was given and received. Yet, even in the depths of grief, there is resilience.

There is quiet strength in carrying memories, in learning how to live in a world that feels different.

Grief does not mean being stuck.

It means honoring what was lost while still moving forward.

It is proof that love does not vanish—it transforms.

So let grief exist.

Let it breathe without shame.

It is not a weakness; it is love continuing beyond loss.

Some may not understand, but those who do know this truth:

Grief is not a sign of refusing to move on—it is a testament to a love that will never fade. ❤️

-Joey-



Siblings are sometimes called the forgotten grievers — not because their grief is any less, but because it's often less acknowledged.

When a sibling dies, the world tends to focus on the parents' loss — but the sibling who remains is grieving too... deeply, silently.

They've lost someone who was meant to be beside them for their whole life.

A shared childhood, inside jokes, memories only they understand.

Someone to grow old with, to reminisce with, to lean on when the rest of the world didn't quite get it.

A sibling is supposed to be the longest relationship we have — from the moment we're born, to the very end.

When that bond is broken, it leaves a hole that can't be filled.

It's not just losing a sibling — it's losing a piece of your past, and the future you imagined together.

To all the siblings grieving quietly in the background:

Your pain is real.

Your love matters.

And your loss deserves to be seen.



A Father's Pain

Sometimes a father wishes
That time could rewind
And that the sands
Of an hourglass could rise.

Sometimes he craves
That the moments he's lost
Could be found again
And hope restored.

Sometimes a father needs
The music to be unwritten
And somehow the winter
Changed into spring.

Sometimes he wants
To be made young again
And that his future is
Still in front of him.

Sometimes a father wishes
That the pain in his heart
Could be replaced with
The smiles he's lost.

Sometimes he longs to
Once again feel all the hugs
He cherished so much
When he was welcomed home.

Sometimes a father's spirit is
So deeply scarred
That his mind could never
Find a way to heal his heart.

Sometimes a father cries
And can't believe that
There isn't a way
To see his children again.

Sometimes a father realizes
That the only way
To do all of this
Is to join his girls in Heaven.

By Don Batson
South Kansas City TCF

My mom, she tells a lot of lies.
She never did before.
But from now until she dies,
She'll tell a whole lot more.
Ask my mom how she is,
And because she can't explain,
She will tell a little lie
Because she can't describe the pain.

Ask my mom how she is,
She'll say that she's alright.
If that's the truth, then tell me,
Why does she cry each night?

Ask my mom how she is,
She seems to cope so well.
She doesn't have a choice, you see.
Nor the strength enough to yell.

Ask my mom how she is,
"I'm fine, I'm well, I'm coping."
For God's sake mom, just tell the
truth.
Just say your heart is broken.

She will love me all her life.
I sure loved her all of mine,
But if you ask her how she is
She'll lie and say she's fine.

I am here in Heaven,
I cannot hug her from here.
If she lies to you, don't listen.
Hug her and hold her near.

On the day we meet again,
We'll smile and I'll be bold.
I'll say, "You're lucky you got in here
mom,
With all the lies you told!"

-Author: Joanne Burr



Does "Healing" Apply to Grief?

"What is it like, this grief, after
you've healed?"

The question came from Marcia, whose son, Mark, died 7 months ago, suddenly and with no prior symptoms, at age 42, after a massive heart attack. Marcia has been coming to our monthly meetings of The Compassionate Friends, Potomac Chapter, for 6 months. The Compassionate Friends (TCF: www.compassionatefriends.org) is an international organization whose mission is to provide support for bereaved parents and siblings.

I am facilitating the meeting. My goal is to make sure that everyone has a chance to share, if they wish, and, further, that the group is a safe place for members to share even their most painful, their most intense feelings.

My son, Andrew, died after being struck by a car on May 19, 1988, so I am also a bereaved parent. He was 4 months shy of his 9th birthday. I was a witness, watching helplessly from a distance too great to be able to intervene.

Having been informed by over 35 years of my own experience, along with extensive contact with therapists and other bereaved parents, I have my own thoughts about healing after loss. But, at this time, I defer to the other group members in attendance before sharing my own point of view, so I look for volunteers.

Anne raises her hand, and after a nod from me, she speaks. Anne's daughter, Joy, aged 23, died of a drug overdose 17 months ago.



“I just wonder when I’ll begin to feel better. My friends have expressed concern to me about why I’m not over the pain.”

I understand. The second year after the loss is often challenging in a new way, when some of the numbness and shock of the first year begins to wear off and the pain seems to go too deep for words. This new intensity is compounded as our culture’s intolerance and impatience with the grief process becomes manifest.

Jeffrey speaks next. Jeffrey’s son, Albert, died in a single car accident a little over 12 years ago. Bert had just had his 18th birthday and he fell asleep behind the wheel of his car. I remember when Jeffrey was a new member of TCF and he used to say that his son made one mistake and it wasn’t fair that he had to pay the ultimate price. Jeffrey has not repeated that for a number of years.

He says, “I don’t know what ‘healing’ would mean. I’m not the same person I was before Bert died. I’m more empathetic, more understanding of others, but I’m also a sadder person overall. I have times of joy, times of satisfaction, but I think of Bert every day – how he lived and how he died. What would the 30-year-old Bert be like today? That never goes away.” I think Jeffrey speaks for the vast majority of bereaved parents. We tend to think of healing as a restoration. For example, if you get an ear infection and take antibiotics, the odds are that you will be healed. Your system will be restored to its previous health.

Grief is different. We are changed forever by those we love, and equally by their passing, and especially if the loss is a child, no matter the age. So, describing the grief process in terms of “healing”, or “resolution”, for example, ignores that the process is lifelong. The process itself is the destination. By contrast, the concept of healing is

pervasive in our culture. An Amazon search of books about healing or using the word “healing” in the title, gives rise to over 60,000 hits! We are all about healing and moving on. How, then, are we to conceptualize the stages of change that the bereaved undergo in their journey, and why is this important? We like to think of ourselves as moving from disequilibrium states to states of equilibrium, to measure our “progress” in some sense. Marathon runners can regard the strategically placed signs informing them of the distance traveled and the distance yet to come with satisfaction and hope. Perhaps that eases the punishing race in some way. Life and grief are not so clear cut. There are no clearly marked signposts, nor, it seems, is there a clear ending.

Perhaps, instead of healing, we can think in terms of well-being. Much has been written about a state of well-being, consisting of various dimensions, or aspects. For our purposes, wellbeing encompasses 5 dimensions – intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual. We will frame the grief process in terms of these 5 dimensions.

Many losses are traumatic. Child loss is always traumatic, no matter the cause, so child loss gives rise to what is often called complicated grief – trauma combined with loss. The moment of death, or learning of the death, becomes an anchor in time, an end to hope, the dissolution of dreams, a starburst that cleaves a parent’s life into two parts – all that preceded the moment, and all subsequent time. Early reactions vary, but can include disbelief, a sense of unreality, shock and numbness, and obsessive reliving of events. As time passes, numbness gives way to intense feelings which may include pain, despair, anger and guilt, to name a few. The parent grieves for his or her own loss plus the inconceivable loss suffered by

their deceased child. The intensity causes many bereaved parents to seek ways to ease the pain, to distract themselves from what is happening inside, a strategy that may contribute to alienation from self.

It’s rare for a bereaved parent to belong to an understanding community – a group that comprehends grief and the grief process – but even in those rare cases, the bereaved parent may withdraw within him or herself, feeling that no one else can possibly understand. I have heard from many bereaved parents who have sought help from a therapist, only to be advised, after a few months, that they must be stuck because they are not “progressing”! Many bereaved parents, even when open to seeking help from a therapist, insist that any such therapist must have lost a child, the better to be understanding of their client. Most parents are part of a community of friends or family that encourages them to “move on”, and often after only a few weeks. Such parents first lose a child and then lose their friends.

It’s common for bereaved parents to stop taking care of their physical bodies. They can be unable to sleep, or tortured by dreams if they can sleep, or unwilling to get out of bed. They stop eating well because it requires attention and effort they are unable to provide due either to lack of caring or inability to concentrate. They may be plagued by obsessive thoughts, trying to resolve a tangled web of “if only’s”. They may be prescribed sedatives by well-meaning doctors who mistake the symptoms of grief as an illness. Worse, they may self-medicate with food or alcohol, for example, to attempt to escape their new reality. Finally, bereaved parents, who once considered themselves part of something larger, at a minimum, the overarching purpose of bringing up their child and preparing him or her for a full life, now may feel alienated

from their formerly familiar universe – a universe that has now utterly betrayed them. Surrounded by friends whose children are engaging in life – growing up, going to college, getting married, having children themselves – bereaved parents may experience a variety of unfamiliar reactions, such as envy or resentment, that complicate their sense of community.

Former religious beliefs are sometimes helpful, but often fall by the wayside as they fail to provide answers for the incomprehensible or comfort for the indescribable. The once infinite universe of possibility has suddenly collapsed into a black hole of emptiness.

All of these reactions are at odds with a state of well-being in each of the 5 dimensions. In the grief process, it is possible to work toward and to achieve a state of well-being in all of the dimensions. As a facilitator, that has been my goal for the members of my chapter of TCF. Through participation in the TCF group, combined, for some, with individual therapy, these early reactions to the death of a child are often alleviated, but not completely eliminated. As is the case with early childhood trauma, the loss can be reframed and growth is possible, even though the hole in the heart is never entirely closed.

At a recent meeting, Jeffrey shared that he has realized that he has experienced a change in the memory of his son. A few weeks ago, his first thought of Albert was a pleasant memory of the sharing of a concert they attended together, rather than obsessive visions of his son's death. He said that it felt as though he rediscovered his relationship with Bert. Although tinged with sadness, his was a newfound joy.

Elaine, who discovered her deceased 32-year-old daughter in her apartment 18 months ago, dead of as yet unknown causes, used to ask me every month if I thought she was

making progress. Rather than answer, I always asked what that would mean for her. Last month, she confided that she was no longer thinking in terms of progress. I asked her how that felt, without giving in to the temptation to say, "Now that's real progress!" She answered that, while it didn't change her sense of pain and loss, she felt an easing in her ability to deal with it. Perhaps, Elaine achieved the beginnings of a sense of emotional well-being. What she felt became less important than that she felt.

Kay, whose daughter, Evelyn, died of breast cancer 12 years ago, spoke. She said that our chapter had become an essential part of her life. She knows that, while each parent has a unique experience, we have more in common than we have differences. It is the only place where she feels comfortable talking about her daughter and that talking about Evelyn keeps her alive in some way.

In the nearly 12 years she has been coming to meetings, she is aware of her gradual change, from a newly bereaved parent whose dominant need was to share her story, to someone capable of listening compassionately to the stories of others, to the present day, when she is capable of giving back. TCF has become a new community for Kay and her contributions to those who are newly bereaved, based on her own experiences, gives her a renewed sense of purpose. Kay, like other "seasoned grievers" in TCF, has learned to continue her relationship as Evelyn's mother. She will never stop feeling sad for her daughter's loss and for her own, but she feels the peace of accepting whatever she does feel.

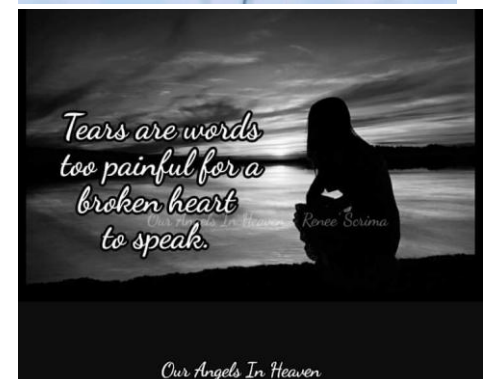
The concept of well-being suits the evolving but never-ending grief process because the attendant disturbances in most, if not all, of the intellectual, emotional, physical, social and spiritual realms can be

addressed over time. In my own case, and those of many others, some of whom are quoted above, the sadness never ends, but peace and well-being can be attained, and fundamental personal change seems inevitable. On the other hand, the concepts of "healing" or "resolution" convey a finality that doesn't seem to correspond to common experience.

The expectation of such eventual finality creates a distance between those in mourning and those in the community who are not, a distance that deepens an already painful sense of isolation, precisely at a time when connection is so desperately needed. It's my hope that this perspective helps friends, family and therapists accept the new person that is emerging from the depths of loss. Perhaps, beyond grief, the aspects of well-being describe other kinds of psychological change and growth as well, in a way that "healing" does not.

--Robert Goor

Potomac Maryland TCF Chapter



Butterfly Soldier

A butterfly is a colorful, delicate creature. A soldier is one who works for a specified cause, a fighter. These two words would never be thought of together, but for me they happen to fit the way I now must live my life.

The butterfly's life is so brief, but the magnificence of this creature stays in my mind, and I long for its splendor when it is gone. The soldier is to be strong in or out of combat, courageous in the face of the enemy. There is no room for weakness (society does not allow it).

The butterfly stands for my daughter, whose life was so short, but the impressions she made on everyone who knew her leave us with beautiful memories. The soldier stands for the daily struggle I have dealing with the tremendous grief I am left with due to her death.

My shield is a smile I must wear to protect others from the sight of grief. Yet in the center is the butterfly with its wings spread wide and all its colors as bright as the dreams left unfulfilled. Butterfly and Soldier... almost opposites that conflict with each other in a constant tug of war.

After the shock wears off, then "grief" becomes the war I must battle every day, without specific rules of assault defined. Tears can come as rapid as an automatic machine gun. The lacerations go so deep but I can't find a medic for bandages or painkillers. The wounds seem to stay open and fester for such a long time. I feel alone on this huge battlefield, unable to hear anything but rifle shots or see anything but bombs lighting up a dark sky. No matter which way I turn, there is another minefield to cross that, with a sudden explosion, could take away my remaining body parts. I attempt to fight back, but it looks as if my position is forever taken over and I am in reverse, never moving forward.

Time seems to be my only ally, easing some of the pain and letting my mind use pleasant memories as healing agents for the open gashes. The Compassionate Friends (who use the butterfly symbol) is my lifeline to realizing that I will survive and learn to cope with the effects of "war." Now I am more like a soldier

who has come back from a raging conflict and has to try and resume a "normal" life. But the "grief war" goes on, even though the scenery is different. I continue to suffer from all of its effects and battle scars.

A "survivor" is the way I see myself and others who fight in this "grief war," not knowing why we are still here or who we are any more. I will go on fighting and withstanding what life has to fire at me each day. My wounds are healing very slowly and forming scars that do not show on the outside, but always exist. Each day the emotions of "war" continue, but get less intense with new-found friends, activities, and a loving family with whom to share the struggle.

I am a "butterfly soldier" holding on to the beauty of my memories and battling the pain of loss. I was lucky to have had a daughter for a few years that added so much to my life. It hurts so much that she is gone, and before all of her goals had been met. The "war" goes on with each passing day, and I take each "battle" as it comes. I still have a long way to go, and a lot of pain to deal with, but I will be okay. I am a survivor, not a war hero, just a survivor. I don't have any medals to prove any heroism or courage ...I'm just a Butterfly Soldier."

--Bonnie Harris-Tibbs,
TCF Richmond, VA

Monarchs in Butterflights of Migration

How much I wish that the monarchs - in their butterflights around us on their way to Mexico - were really Chris and not his representatives stopping briefly for a visit. Losing him and the opportunities to visit with him, talk with him in person, kiss him, share his intensity for life and living it so well, make us so lonely. Thank goodness for the butter flights!

--Bonnie May Malody

Now Let Us Look to Butterflies

Where are all the butterflies?
Do they wing their way
unaccompanied toward light?
Do they rest sometimes
in their silent flight?

Are they ever frightened
in the murky depths of night?
Or do they sleep within our hearts?

If so, let us awaken them
with gentle voice and touch.
Let's bid them spread their wings
to fly transformed with joy
and such abandon that our pain, too,
will yield within their tender clutch.

Now let us look to butterflies
as symbols of our deepest love.
Death, for all its boastful claims,
has power only over mortal clay.
Our children's souls, unbound
by earthly frames, now soar;
and we, enriched by steadfast love,
ignite new lives
from their love's flames.

--Shirley C. Ottman

i carry your heart with me

I carry your heart with me
(i carry it in my heart)
i am never without it
(anywhere i go you go, my dear;
and whatever is done by only
me
is your doing, my darling)
i fear no fate
(for you are my fate, my sweet)
i want no world (for beautiful
you are my world, my true)
and it's you are
whatever a moon has always
meant, and whatever a sun will
always sing is you
here is the deepest secret nobody
knows
(here is the root of the root and
the bud of the bud and
the sky of the sky of a tree called
life;
which grows higher than the
soul
can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder
that's keeping the stars apart
i carry your heart (i carry it in my
heart)

--ee cummings

*From where I stand,
I cannot see
How far it is from you to me.
At different times it seems to
be
a step or an infinity.*
--Richard Dew, TCF Maryland

Father's Day Is Still A Time for Celebrating...

A long time has passed since I've enjoyed a holiday—or for that matter any special occasion. With Father's Day coming up shortly, I've decided that this year I'm celebrating. The kids used to love when special occasions came along. I can still remember Stef's eighth birthday, only three months before her death, and how proud she was when we told her she could invite her best friends over for a birthday party. She wore her prettiest blue trimmed party dress with the lace ruffles.

The games they played still stick in my mind. There was "pin the tail on the donkey" and then "Simon Says." I remember clothes flying everywhere in a contest to see which child could put on a complete set of clothes fastest over her party clothes. I remember the hotdogs, punch and cake, the party favors. I remember Stef's giggles.

The memories also wander back to the party our family threw for Stephen's fifth birthday, only three days before the accident which also claimed his life. I still have the picture in my mind of that goofy orange cap someone had given Steve. He loved it, but it was at least two sizes too small. When he tried to put it on, the bill of the cap was up and Stephen flashed us one of those impish grins that reminds you of Spanky and Our Gang. As I'm writing this, the tears are flowing down my cheeks remembering the good times we had together.

A lot of things changed when the kids died. Christmas, Easter, birthdays all became days other people celebrated. But not us. I've done a lot of thinking since then. I know Stef and Steve are in a better place than I could ever imagine and that every day is a holiday for them. In my mind, I think Stef and Stephen would be sad if they felt their Mom and Dad couldn't celebrate life anymore.

Pat and I now have another son, Christopher, plus we have our fourth child on the way. We're trying to rebuild our lives, and I feel we have been blessed along the way. Of

course, Christopher is too young to understand Father's Day, but even without him here, I would still consider celebrating Father's Day.

I can still remember the Father's Day a couple of years before Stef and Stephen died. With their mom, they had searched all over for something special for me, finally deciding on a T-shirt that said, "World's Coolest Dad." I still wear that now-faded shirt occasionally despite the many grass stains and grease marks. When Father's Day arrives, I think I'm going to pull out that old T-shirt and wear it.

I'm going to lay down out in the grass, letting the warm breeze hit me. And I'm going to pretend I'm being caressed by Stef and Steve. I'm going to remember... and I'm going to celebrate!!!

--By Wayne Loder, TCF Lakes Area, MI.

Capsized

Put a family on board a boat and, when a loved one dies, the boat capsizes. Each family member is stunned, but they begin to swim for shore the best way they know how. Some swim with long strokes, others float or dogpaddle while hoping others are coming along okay. It seems to take all of one's energy, leaving no reserve.

They want to stay together but need to have room apart to navigate through the waves. Some comfort is found in that they are not alone, and yet are on their own to find the method to shore that works for them.

Successfully reaching shore has more rewards than realized. In looking back, subtle signs of encouragement were almost overlooked, and that love, and support still lingers on in the heart—healing—along with a newly found confidence in inner strength.

A new relationship is born enabling each family member to carry forth a treasure of personal memories, honoring the loved one who has gone ahead to a shoreline we have yet to see. The journey through grief is designed to build strength, to honor our differences, and to encourage others for a lifetime.

--Jayne Belancio

Did you know?

The Compassionate Friends offers virtual support through our Online Support Community.

These chat rooms supply comfort, understanding, encouragement, and friendship.

The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing.

There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

compassionatefriends.org

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

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.