

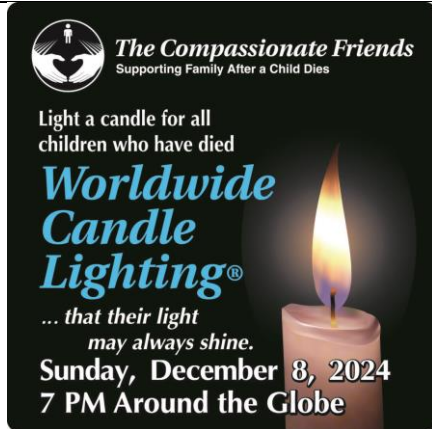


The Compassionate Friends
Eastern Jackson County Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Nov-Dec 2024

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



WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

December 8, 2024

Sponsored by:

The Eastern Jackson County (Independence) and South Kansas City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

In memory of all children who have died, but will not be forgotten . . . *that their light may always shine*

In loving memory of all children who are no longer with us, The Compassionate Friends extends an invitation for you, your family, and friends to join us and other bereaved families around the globe for the 26th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting.

Sunday December 8, 2024, at 7 pm
At Walnut Gardens Community of Christ
19201 RD Mize Rd
Independence, MO

What to bring:

1. If you would like a picture button, come at 6:30 pm. Bring a picture on plain paper 2 ¼ to 2 ½ inches or email the picture to phillipsplace@aol.com and the button will be prepared and ready for you when you arrive.
2. Also bring a picture for the memory table.
3. A snack to share after the program
4. If desired, bring a gift for a needy child in memory of your child
5. Plus we will be having a raffle.

As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, bereaved families gather to honor their loved ones in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious and political boundaries. Believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the ceremony creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Wherever you are at that time, we hope you will join us in this loving remembrance. A memorial message board will be available that day at www.thecompassionatefriends.org. Please allow time for sign in and find a seat before 7pm.

Special Handling Please

I was handed a package the other day. It was wrapped securely to be mailed away. Attached to the outside as plain as could be was a simple note for all to see. "Please rush through the holiday season; too painful to open for any

reason.

Contained within find one broken heart fragile, broken, falling apart." Tried to go shopping the other day; the hype of the season blew me away. Sat down to write cards; that was insane. Couldn't find the list or think of my name. People say, "Come over, be of good cheer." "Celebrate the holidays, prepare a New Year." But my grief overwhelms me like waves in the sea. Can they cope with my crying, an unsettled me? I don't have any holiday cheer. Decorations, traditions, big family meal—I can't do this year. Do you know how I feel? Guilty and frustrated! I've let everyone down! Our holiday celebrations were the best in town. So just ship me away, "address unknown." When my grief is better I might fly home.

--Mary J. Pinkava, TCF Atlanta Online, www.tcfatlanta.org



November Chill

The calendar turns to November, and brings along with it a sense of darkness and chill.

The trees hang on to their last few leaves as they stand almost bare upon the hills. The carpet of dried leaves crunches below our feet, while loose ones swirl in the wind.

And as I close my eyes and hear the stillness all around, I reflect on how other Novembers have been. There were the ones which were faced with such energy and excitement for what was to come. There were plans filled with joy as we anticipated adventures, and we'd work hard so we could look forward to fun.

We'd set goals and meet them each week as they came, with a sense of relief when done, encouraging each other with reminders to give us the motivation to continue to run.

It wasn't so long ago when we could still easily see the bright colors of leaves that still remained, when although we faced challenges like everyone does, there just wasn't the intensity of pain.

I remember noticing bright oranges and yellows that mixed with the brown...they stood out to me, so bright! And I know they're still there this November too, but I do not notice them popping out anymore, try as I might.

Back in those days, the brightness always won; and my heart felt happiness enough to get warm. But then came the Novembers when darkness seeped through; along with the chill of a couple of fierce storms. The tor-rential rains and the powerful winds turned us inside out, and shook us to the core.

And although the storms that caused the damage are done, we still feel quite broken and sore. In the aftermath, there's not much left...and what is left is twisted and bent. And no amount of searching can ever bring back all that was destroyed by the wicked storms.

Although the elegance of remembering Novembers which once were beautiful will always be found in our hearts and minds,

the brutality of the stormiest Novembers that followed are deeply etched, too, and are morbidly unkind.

November will lead to December and winter, which others see full of holiday brightness and glee. And, yes, we remember such feelings too, when our home sparkled, especially when we lit up the tree.

But now the world seems to force us all to just look for delight, no matter what has become of our lives.

We know that the season coming upon us offers bountiful challenges...and we'll look for shelter in facing the strife.

--By Lora Krum



Traditions: What to Keep and What to Let Go

Traditions are very important to our families, and we may share large and small ones throughout the year. Some may be in conjunction with significant events like a graduation or a wedding, and others occur annually on birthdays and holidays. Traditions are passed down through generations, creating comforting experiences and memories that provide a sense of belonging. After our child, grandchild, brother, or sister dies, however, what once was comforting can be painful and intolerable.

This holiday time of the year is often particularly hard for managing different needs within our bereaved families. Whether a few months have passed, a few years, or decades, the empty chair that belonged to our child, sibling, or grandchild, requires us to re-evaluate how traditions feel. Trying to keep a tradition that fit our "before" family may not feel the same or good.

It is especially important to recognize the differing needs of siblings and parents when deciding what to keep and what to let go. For

a parent, trying to continue a tradition as it was but with one less child can be very heartbreaking. For a bereaved sibling, losing a tradition that they came to depend on can feel like they're losing even more and have less to count on than ever. When one sibling remains, it can feel overly burdensome to be the sole daughter or son who carries those traditions.

What can we do to manage such deep and personal needs that differ in a family after substantial loss? Here are some steps that can help.

- Sit down together and discuss how everyone is feeling about the upcoming holidays.
- Allow everyone to share how continuing each tradition makes them feel and which may be prohibitively distressing this year.
- Listen compassionately to one another, understanding that needs can vary widely within any loving family unit.
- Work hard to compromise. Try to differentiate what might be difficult for a family member to continue from what would be unbearable.
- Eliminate the ones, for now, that would bring more harm than benefit to any family member.
- Reduce holiday expectations so that each family member has a chance to cherish a tradition that is meaningful and grieve what has been lost.
- Keep traditions that are too upsetting for anyone until another year. Individual and family needs change year to year, and there may be room for those another time.

Having these challenging discussions can be surprisingly valuable as they prompt deeper sharing that can bring us closer. Even long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings can find making decisions about what to keep and what to let go of painful at different stages. Allow flexibility to change when something doesn't feel right since we may be surprised by painful triggers. As we remain open and flexible through each year that passes, we help our families keep some traditions, modify others, and cherish what remains.

--Shari O'Loughlin



An Open Letter to Grandparents Dear Grandparents,

We grandparents are put into the unenviable double role with the death of a grandchild. Not only do we lose a grandchild, but we find ourselves in the helpless position of watching our children grieve the loss of their child. Several of the challenges with which we are faced as bereaved grandparents include communicating with our children, being a good listener (often very hard for us grandpas), and trying to understand our roles with our children, other family members, and friends as we face being strong for our children yet giving ourselves room for our grieving process.

As grandparents, one of our greatest challenges is asking 'why' did such a tragedy happen to our family. As the family matriarchs and patriarchs, in our minds we are the ones who are supposed to die first. Not our children, and most definitely not our grandchildren. The death of a grandchild goes directly against everything we consider the natural order of our family's life. The natural order is for us as the matriarchs and patriarchs to go first. Yet here we are faced with the reality of a grandchild's death before ours. If you are asking 'why' or more specifically 'why not me' (as I did), you are a normal and loving grandparent.

As grandparents, we also must deal with what I call the double whammy of grief. All our grandchildren are very special to us. Each one is uniquely blessed to touch us in a way no other child does, not even the other grandchildren. My first whammy was the loss of that grandchild's uniqueness in our heart and our life. My dear BB (our loving nickname for Briellynn Bullard) died within 72 hours of the diagnosis of her cancer. The hole in my life and heart was sudden. BB's uniqueness is gone. That is an emptiness we will never refill. No matter the time it takes, grandma and grandpa, the hole

in your heart and life is sudden. Give yourself time to process and grieve in your own way and time.

The second whammy is the grief and helplessness in comforting our children, the parents of our lost grandchild. We as parents have devoted our lives to the comfort and best for our children. Suddenly we are thrust into a position in which we are very unfamiliar. We are helpless in our ability to comfort our children. Stay involved with your children but give them space to grieve in their ways. Process their grief as you process your own.

In our position as leaders of the family it is important to remember that all family members will grieve differently. We grieve differently than our children (parents) who grieve differently than any siblings (other grandchildren). Remember there are different ways to grieve. Some will grieve by being quiet while others will keep busy occupying themselves with work or hobbies. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Give your family members space and allow various ways of grief.

Always remember there is also no timetable for grief. Some family members will take time, some a very long time. Grief has no timetable. Grandparents, don't try and push your other family members to adhere to your, or any others, timetable. Grief does not tell time. Grief does not own a clock or calendar. Grief has no timetable for anyone.

I mentioned this earlier to you but feel it is worth mentioning once again before closing my letter. Be careful you get so concerned and involved in your children's grieving you forget your own grief. This can be especially difficult for grandpas. It definitely was for me. We grandpas want to fix things, especially those of you of my generation. Please don't forget you, grandma and grandpa, need to also grieve. Pay attention to your grief. Have someone, or somewhere, to go with your pain and grief. You must take care of yourself, or you won't be able to take care of others.

As I close, remember you most definitely are not alone. The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is indeed your friend. At TCF you are

amongst friends who understand your grief and your pain. If your surviving grandchildren view you as their 'hip' grandma or grandpa, you are probably a techie. You can access the TCF Facebook Group/TCF-Loss of a Grandchild to be with other grandparents experiencing the same grief, pain, and issues that come with being a grieving grandparent.

I am concluding my letter with our Grandparent's Credo. Read it often and remember, you are not walking alone.

Grandparent's Credo

We are the grieving grandparents, shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild. We have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them. When they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. Even though at times we feel powerless to help, we continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Your grieving grandparent friend,
David Dieterle

How can you help me this holiday season?

- Remember: The greatest gift is sharing memories
- Let me know when you are hurting or missing them too. The worst is thinking I am alone in my grief.
- Help me to honor them in some meaningful way
- Allow me to cry, laugh or leave when I need to
- Allow traditions to change to accommodate the missing space
- Allow me to say no to invitations
- Allow me to change my mind often
- Remember that much of what I do is a reflection of my grief not my feelings about the holiday or my friends and families. Though I am hurting I still love and care.

-Tanya Lord
©www.thegrieftoolbox.com
www.facebook.com/grieftoolbox



Grieving on the Job: How to Navigate Work After the Death of a Child

Roger Harden was relaxing at home on a Friday evening when his phone rang. Seeing his son TJ's number on the screen, he answered, saying "Hey son, what's up?" After a long silence, an unfamiliar voice said, "Mr. Harden, this is Kevin, deputy coroner for Jersey County. There's been an accident."

TJ had been driving up a levee near work when his truck flipped.

According to Kevin, TJ had died instantly.

After a brief conversation, Roger hung up the phone. His 30-year-old son was dead. Life as he knew it was over, but Roger had phone calls to make: to his ex-wife, TJs mom; his younger son; his father; texts to send to his manager and a close friend at Delta Air Lines where he works; a funeral to plan.

Grief is an inescapable part of life. The death of a child or sibling is shattering, and when it happens, we bring our pain and sadness to work with us. Yet the vast majority of workplaces are ill-prepared to navigate the minefield of loss.

Very few managers receive training on how to support a grieving employee and many have little to no experience dealing with significant losses of their own. Despite their best intentions, they may say and do the wrong thing. They may neglect to tell your coworkers your child has died. They may check in infrequently to see how you're handling the return to work and stop all together once you appear to be doing better.

Although virtually everyone who's grieving returns to work before they're ready, here are some ways to ease the transition and garner support from your boss and your team:

Begin with what you need.

- Think about the return. Do you want to start on Monday and work

a full week? Or would you prefer to come back on Thursday or Friday? Would it help to stop by the office for a short visit first to get the initial conversations with your coworkers out of the way?

- If you have an in-person role, would you prefer to work from home for a while? If you work remotely, would you prefer to be in the office, either to be around your team or to have a refuge from your grief?
- Consider whether you want your colleagues to bring up your loss. Are there circumstances when you don't want people to approach you? Do you want your coworkers to send cards, offer to drop off a meal, leave flowers on your desk?
- Roger's boss told him to take all the time he needed, but two weeks after TJs death, Roger realized he couldn't sit home alone any longer. When he returned to work, his manager asked, "What are you doing here?" Roger said, "I can't stay at home." His manager nodded and said, "Fair enough."

Reach out to your boss.

- Begin by confirming that everyone knows about your loss. Roger's bosses made sure his team and the others he worked with knew about TJ's death which eliminated his need to share the awful news. It also prevented awkward encounters with coworkers cheerfully asking where he'd gone during his time off.

Discuss the timing and details of your return and request any accommodations you'll need for funeral arrangements, grief support, child care, etc.

Let your boss know whether you want your colleagues to mention your loss at work and how you want them to acknowledge it, if at all.

Consider what you can and can't do.

- Your boss and your colleagues can't read your mind. Although they may offer to help, they won't know what you do and don't need. Think about the responsibilities of your position and what might feel hard or impossible right now. Could you talk to suppliers on the phone? Meet with customers? Deliver a presentation? Your brain may feel fuzzy, and

focusing may be a challenge.

Consider asking one of your colleagues to check your work for typos or mathematical errors before it's sent to a customer or another department.

- After returning to work, Roger felt as though he was going through the motions. "I'm the expert on electrical discharge machines (EDM), and I can run the EDM blindfolded. So that's what I did. I took all the EDM projects, whether they were a high priority or not, and everyone was okay with that. I knew my brain wasn't working the way it should, but I also knew I needed to be at work and keep my brain functioning."

Ask your boss or a trusted colleague to serve as your point person.

- Even well-meaning coworkers will make mistakes. They'll bring up your loss or inquire about whether you're doing okay, even if you asked them not to. The person you least want to spend time with will keep cornering you in the breakroom or popping into your cubicle to invite you out for coffee. Colleagues won't understand why mentioning your loved one's name or asking how your kids are coping just before an all staff meeting or client presentation is the wrong time. A point person can redirect an overly eager coworker or gently educate your team on how and when to broach your loss.

Prepare to cry at work.

- Grief is unpredictable, and triggers are everywhere. Carry tissues at all times. If you don't have an office, find a safe space to retreat to if you need a few minutes alone. A private bathroom, a close friend's office, a rarely used conference room, a quiet spot outside.

Be honest with your colleagues.

- If you're struggling, ask for help. Your boss and your team can't support you if they don't know what you need. If you want a decrease in your workload or a different assignment, say so. If the holidays are triggering or the anniversary of your child's death is approaching, ask about taking time off.

- Roger connected early on with a coworker at Delta named Tim Moye who had also lost his son. Roger sent unfiltered emails to Tim asking questions like “Who cries in the blade tip grinding room? Or at Lowe’s or Ollie’s Bargain Outlet?” Tim responded by saying, “Congratulations. You’re normal.”

Know that your needs will change over time.

- Your grief will ebb and flow. The acute pain will ease, but you will still get blindsided by sadness. Keep your boss and point person updated on how you’re doing, what you’re finding challenging and where you need extra help or support. They won’t know anything has changed if you don’t tell them.

Give yourself grace.

- Weighed down with grief, you may snap at a coworker or burst into tears during a meeting. Months, even years, after your child or sibling dies, you may struggle to concentrate at times or feel stressed or anxious. Conversely, you may discover that work is a safe haven from your sadness. You’ll find yourself joking with a colleague or allowing a project to distract you from your loss. Remind yourself that you are doing the best you can.

Most of all, remember to breathe. “For me,” Roger said, “for most machinists, we hate making mistakes. We hate getting things wrong. We hate missing details, and we hate scrapping parts. But if you can pause, take measured steps, do what you know how to do in the way you know how to do it, you can still get the job done.”

Navigating Grief in the Workplace

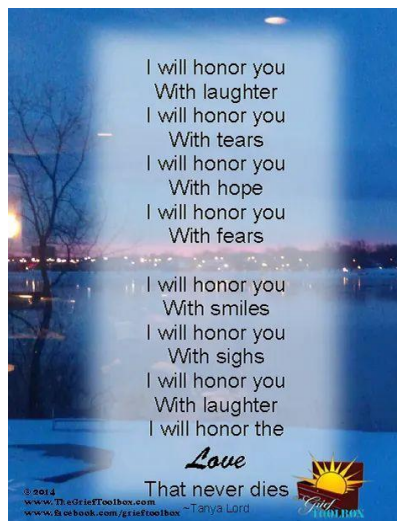
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- Give yourself grace

— Margo Fowkes, *Grieving on the Job*

The Compassionate Friends
compassionatefriends.org

“Merry” Christmas

I question if Christmas can ever be “merry”
except to the heart of an innocent child—
for when time has taught us the meaning of sorrow
and sobered the spirits that once were so wild,
when all the green graves that lie scattered behind us
like milestones are marking the length of the way,
and echoes of voices that no more shall greet us
have saddened the chimes of a bright Christmas Day—
we may not be merry, the long years forbid it—
the years that have brought us such manifold smarts.
But we may be happy if only we carry
the spirit of Christmas deep down in our hearts.
Hence I shall not wish you the old “Merry Christmas,”
since that is of shadowless childhood a part,
but one that is holy and happy and peaceful,
the Spirit of Christmas deep down in your heart.



A New Year

As the year draws to its close, I pause...reflecting back over the long, empty months. My first full year without you—a milestone if only for the fact I survived at all, I suppose. Eighteen months ago we were together as we had always been.... Your death precipitated my

reluctant birth, a tormented entrance into existence as a bereaved parent... a Mommie with an empty home, empty arms. No one left to mother.

I look back upon this year, January through December—winter, spring, summer, fall and finally winter again. The seasons have come and they have departed, just as they did when you were here to adore the warmth of the July sun and hate the cold of the bleak gray skies of January. The coldness of winter has lingered in my heart, my loneliness and grief holding it there. (I’ve heard that if I let go of the coldness, the sunshine of your smile will remain...but I’m afraid.) I’ve gone through all the pain of all the holidays, the exquisite occasion of your birth date, celebrated in sorrow without you....

One of my closest friendships gradually faded in this past year of mourning—someone who loved you who could not bear the pain of your departure. This has added to the crushing burden of losing you. I have met far too many others in the same position I am in, and I began laying the groundwork for new friendships from these meetings. I have wept more than I believed possible, and (with your support?) faced and conquered the bleakest of the black times encountered so far...

But there have also been occasions for laughter in these months; and I have come to acknowledge that life will go on, regardless of the direction of the path I choose in my efforts to learn to live in a world that no longer holds my beloved, cherished child. I have learned more of death than I ever wished to know, and understand more of life and survival now as I struggle daily with my grief.

More and more I feel you trying to comfort me. I can sometimes feel your calm message... words you could have never spoken in life... surrounding me like the warmth of the love we shared for all of your life and most of mine: “*This is how it’s supposed to be, Mommie. I’m all right.*”

I love you, baby.
--Sally Migliaccio, TCF, Babylon, Syosset & Rockville Centre, NY

For That I'm Thankful

It doesn't seem to get any better...but
it doesn't get any worse, either.
For that, I am thankful.
There are no more pictures to be
taken...but there are memories to
be cherished. For that, I am
thankful.
There is a missing chair at the table...
but the circle of family gathers
close. For that, I am thankful.
The turkey is smaller...but there is still
stuffing. For that, I am thankful.
The days are shorter...but the nights
are softer. For that, I am thankful.
The pain is still there...but it lasts only
moments. For that, I am thankful.
The calendar still turns, the holidays
still appear, and they still cost too
much...
but I'm still here.
For that, I am thankful.
The room is still empty, the soul still
aches...but the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.
The guests still come; the dishes pile
up...
but the dishwasher works.
For that, I am thankful.
The name is still missing, the words
still unspoken...but the silence is
shared.
For that, I am thankful.
The snow still falls, the sled still waits,
and the spirit still wants to...
For that, I am thankful.
The stillness remains...but the
sadness is smaller. For that, I am
thankful.
The moment is gone...but the love is
forever. For that I am blessed. For
that, I am grateful.
Love was once (and still is) a part of
my being...For that, I am thankful.
I am LIVING...And for that, I am
thankful.
Having loved and having been loved is
perhaps the most wondrous
reason of all.
For that, I am thankful.

—Darcie Sims

Words from Sascha Wagner:

To the Dead Infants

*They are gone
these young hearts
these flawless souls.
They are gone
and we must grieve
their loss—
we must remember.*

*But when we begin to live again,
then we can be
each one of us
a heritage of humanness
a memorial of hope
a sign of closer understanding
in their name
who are gone,
these young hearts
these flawless souls—
in their name
let our lives grow*

Wish

*I wish you gentle days
and quiet nights.
I wish you memories
to keep you strong.
I wish you time to smile
and time for song.*

*And then I wish you friends
to give you love,
when you are hurt and lost
and life is blind.*

*I wish you friends and love
and peace of mind.*

Candle in the Night

I could not find her in the sky.
I did not see her 'neath the sun.
But when the shadows darken,
And the endless day is done,
Like a candle in the night
She gleams upon my sight,
And her whispered name
Warms me in the flame.
Vicki...in my prayer
Holds and loves me there.

—Earl Katz

www.changingperspectivesonline.com

“Why can't you stop thinking about them?”

Because they lived.

Because they were part of your life.

Because they are gone too soon.

Because you would give anything to
have just one more day with them.

Because the more you
keep their memory alive,
the more ALIVE they feel.

Go ahead and think about them.

Talk about them.
Write about them.
Dream about them.

Let their memory be a
significant part of your life.”

—Jenni Brennan

Confessions from the Couch:
Finding Hope and Resilience in Grief
— A Grief Journal and Guide After Loss

Grieving is like
having broken ribs.
On the outside,
you look fine,
but with every
breath, it hurts.

— Unknown —

We are very grateful for the Love Gifts received from:

Barbara Starr in memory of her son,
David.
Sheila Nickerson in memory of
Miranda Williams.
Bill and Ginny Phillips in memory of
their son, Kevin.
Nancy Talley in memory of Craig
Matthew.

**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](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
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.