



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September-October 2022

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
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(877)969-0010

Mark your calendar for these
upcoming events:



Our Chapter will be having its 10th Annual Walk to Remember on September 24, 2022, at 9 am at Waterfall Park in Independence, MO. Just behind Bass Pro. Families and friends can spend a morning together honoring the child who is no longer with us. Registration starts at 8:30 am. Registration for each walker is \$10. We accept checks and cash only. A few shirts will be available for purchase the morning of the walk for \$15 each.

WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

DECEMBER 11, 2022, at 7:00 PM
At Walnut Gardens Community of Christ
Church. More details to follow.

Thoughts on School

Another summer has come and gone. School has begun—a new beginning for most families, and bathing suits hang forgotten as children shop and choose new clothes and necessary school supplies for the coming year.

This is great, but what if your child won't be going back to school? One mother was surprised to learn that the beginning of school would have to be anticipated along with other holidays during the first year of grieving for her child. "It seemed like everywhere I looked," she explained, "children were dressed in new fall clothes, carrying new book bags and lunch boxes. And it hurt so badly."

I suppose Cecil and I learned about holidays from the very beginning since Sherry was killed on the Fourth of July. For weeks before the Fourth, we cringe as announcers on television promote places and activities for participants to gather and celebrate the birth of our nation.

Even though Cecil and I and Sherry's sister and brothers can't "celebrate" that day, we have learned to cope with it by planning an outing away from the firecrackers, a time to celebrate Sherry's life—even though that life ended far too soon.

And, dear friends, my message is that, when school begins, parents of children who won't be back in school this year can use the same coping skills: drawing close to spouses, surviving children or understanding, compassionate friends in celebration of that child's life.

We can never block out what is happening around us, nor should we try to, but we can adapt our activities to better fit our grief walk. I always

say grieving parents have to find a drummer who suits their gait better than the drummer still marching in the fast lane!

--Martha Clark, TCF, Charlotte, NC

The Fall of Fall

What is it about the season
that takes me back in time?
Everything I do,
I find you are on my mind.
Haunting dreams find me at night
when I try to sleep
and every little detail is replayed,
and the sadness falls so deep.
Something about the close of
summer
seems to bring it back,
making it so hard to move
onward
and stay on track.
Something about the dying
and fading of the trees
brings my heart to sorrow
with the falling of the leaves.
How I long to stop it,
to keep the fall away
but times marches on,
and summer just won't stay.
I know with the fall,
winter's not far behind,
another lonely season,
and the memories flood my mind.
I cry my tears of sorrow,
and pray for spring to come,
a rebirth of the earth
and the warmth of the sun.
It makes the memories soften
and gentler to recall,
but now my life is saddened
with the nearing of fall.

-- Sheila Simmons, in memory of her son
Steven (3/24/70-10/19/99), reprinted
from TCF Atlanta

Finding the first yellow leaf...
 (how it reminds me of autumn).
 Finding the first yellow leaf...
 (how it reminds me of time).

Seems like another new year now.
 Not the same year I began.
 Nothing reminds me of changings
 Quite like a summertime gone.

Finding the first yellow leaf
 (Will it remind me of grieving?)
 Everything golden in summer
 Turning to gray after fall....

--Sascha Wagner

September Song

"I wonder how many people think about what it's like for a parent not to have to pack a Snoopy lunch pail for their child ever again." September marks the re-entry of kids into the world of academia...but for some parents it's the reminder that the excitement of the children that electrifies the air won't be the same in their homes this year. So many hopes and dreams and memories are wrapped up in what occupies a major part of a child's life...school time. Summer cushions us from having to be painfully aware that our child won't be walking to school with the other kids or won't be trying out for the lead part in the school play or won't fall in love with the girl he sits behind in math class.

Parents who never had the pleasure of "letting them go" to school for the first time know what they missed.

They re-member their own "first time" and would like to have relived it with their child. They would like to have made it really special and asked all the questions that their own parents asked them when they arrived home from school. Hopes and dreams for this child's future will never be realized. "I wonder if my neighbor remembers that if my baby had lived, this is the year he would have started kindergarten. I wanted him to have a Snoopy lunch box just like the other kids."

-TCF, Portland, OR

"What we have once enjoyed we can never lose...All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

~Helen Keller



Ghost Story

"Daddy, Daddy, come with me please."
 To others it's only the wind in the trees,
 But in the soft haze of dusk when the mind runs free,
 The ghost in the woods is calling to me.
 He's spoken often since we've been apart
 In a voice heard not with ears but my heart.
 Down familiar overgrown pathways he leads
 me to the creek where wood ducks' nest
 in the weeds.
 "Over here. Over here." By the ghost I'm drawn
 Into the thicket where he once found a fawn,
 White spots on brown in a thick bed of leaves,
 Had he not shown me, I would have believed
 it was bare. "Look up, Daddy look. It's still there."
 The frayed end of the rope swing high in the air dangles,
 unused since he left. Just beyond,
 past the spring and the meadow lies the pond.
 "Come. Come." Running ahead, he leads me there
 to the sunken log in the corner where he caught his first fish. I stand, now alone,
 while darkness deepens, then slowly head home,
 hearing his voice fade into the haunting call of the owl. I stroll through the dark and with hope recall
 How a few past times before my walk was done,
 I experienced something beyond belief,
 As wholly engulfed by memories and love,
 for a brief magic moment, I and the ghost became one.

--From *Rachel's Cry, A Journey Through Grief*
 by Richard A. Dew, MD

"Memories of You fill my mind like thousands of Bright Stars in the sky."

Grief
 I had my own notion of grief.
 I thought it was a sad time
 That followed the death of someone you love.
 And you had to push through it.
 To get to the other side.
 But I'm learning there is no other side.
 There is no pushing through.
 But rather,
 There is absorption,
 Adjustment,
 Acceptance,
 And grief is not something that you complete.
 But rather you endure.
 Grief is not a task to finish,
 And move on,
 But an element of yourself
 An Alternation of your being
 A new way of seeing.
 A new definition of self.



The Gift of Someone Who Listens

Those of us who have traveled a while
 Along this path called grief
 Need to stop and remember that mile—

The first mile of no relief.
 It wasn't the person with answers
 Who told us of ways to deal
 It wasn't the one who talked and talked
 That helped us start to heal.
 Think of the friends who quietly sat
 And held our hands in theirs.
 The ones who let us talk and talk
 And hugged away our tears.
 We need to always remember
 That more than the words we speak,
 It's the gift of someone who listens
 That most of us desperately seek.

--Nancy Myerholts,
 Waterville/Toledo TCF

Eat the damn chocolate cake.
Walk in the rain and splash in
the puddles. Ride with the
windows down. Dance. Sing.
Talk to strangers. Smile at
everyone. Hug someone. Go
barefoot. Take naps. Make
lots of love. Try new things.
Spend time with kids. Laugh
every chance you get. Help
others.
LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST,
NO REGRETS.
LIFE IS WAY TOO SHORT.

Scribbles

The scribbles of a child,
How precious can they be.
It depends on where you find
them—
sometimes on the table,
sometimes on the floor,
sometimes on the bottom
of a dresser drawer.
The scribbles of a child
What joy comes to my soul.
When on a certain given day,
In an unsuspecting way,
the scribbles I discover
Are of a child who'll write no
more.

--Mary Pauley, TCF, LaGrange, IL

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.

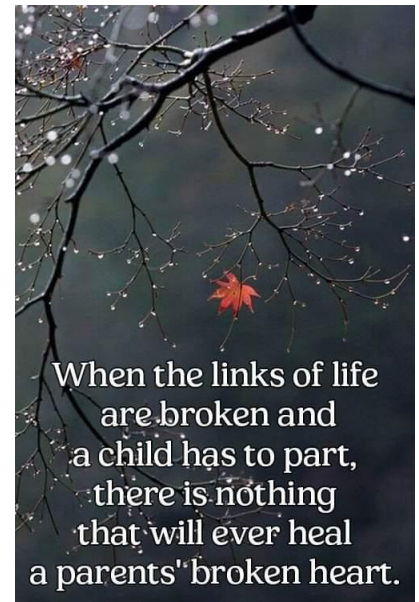
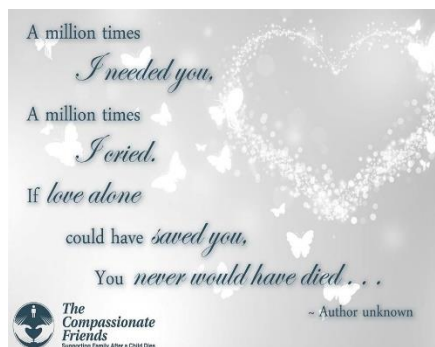
—Sr. Marilyn Welch,
Hospice Foundation of America

I'm moving right
along...sometimes feeling joy
Sometimes I can accept that I
have lost my boy
Til suddenly, the grief grabs me,
gets a hold
It's got me by the throat, my heart
is going cold
Struggling to breathe, all I can do
is cry

The tears keeping coming
through the emptiness inside
How can I be okay with the fact
that he is gone
He's taken his last breath, he is
completely done
I know I couldn't see the future in
my youth
I couldn't know how bad this pain
would be my truth
I had no way to know that this is
what would be
I really have no choice. But it still
gets to me
My friends tell me my boy would
not want me to keep
forever feeling sad, lost, alone, in
grief

But damn I miss my son. I wish
he was still here
And nothing seems to help; this
has been so severe!

--Jenny Donaldson, South Kansas
City Chapter



Remembrance

Remembrance is a golden chain
Death tries to break, but all in vain.
To have, to love, and then to part
Is the greatest sorrow of one's heart.
The years may wipe out many things
But some they wipe out never.
Like memories of those happy times
When we were all together.
--Unknown

In memory of all babies
born sleeping, those whom
we have carried but never
met or held in our arms
and those who fell asleep
after birth...keep the stars
shining bright angels etc

"There are special people in
our lives who never leaves
us... Even after they are gone"
D. Morgan



The perspective...

I have, maybe not as willingly as it appears to have gained perspective on "life". I'd also say that as much as I appear to live a carefree and chaotic life...I'm someone of stern routine.

I go to sleep at the same time most every night, regardless of what I'm watching. I wake up like clockwork, my food palate is that of a seven-year-old, and I wear the same clothes over and over until they've come back into style.

And yes, this time of year comes around and my thoughts take a deeper direction. I've always likened it to deep sea diving. Deep sea diving, you go down, explore, surface...reflect on the exploration and when rested...submerge.

This time of year, I feel as though my dives are deeper...deep grief diving. Each year I submerge my soul so that I can reflect on the past, surface to solidify my present with nothing to gain or lose...I'm indifferent to the results.

Yet like clockwork, as the 23rd approaches, I find myself diving even deeper than the last. His memory does fade...the earthly one. I no longer dive to seek him, I simply dive to seek self.

I used to fear what YOU might think of my thoughts, he's crazy, he needs to move on, he this and he that. The more times I've submerged myself in it, rolled in

the fear and memories...I've surfaced in peace. I no longer fear what others might think...I breath.

As my perspective has changed, I've learned to dive...deep slow breaths, I can stay longer, take more in. I no longer need his picture on the cup, because what's faded earthly has cemented itself within.

That cement is what gives me courage, peace, and the inner self awareness that I can go there and back willingly. I have nothing to get over, nothing to fear. If this is what a peaceful life feels...I have no choice but to go deeper. Not for him, for me.

Imagine for a moment this...sitting on the edge of a boat, feet dangling in the dark water that rages...this is the tragedy we face. No one forces you to put on the mask...the boat is empty...yet we here others aboard.

To put on the mask and sit above is only fear, a choice, but it's real. Chaos fills the mind, the boat sways and the ocean continues to rage...until desperation settles in...we give it up, hands free...I believe we jump.

Nothing to gain, but everything to leave behind...it's the first step toward living. The panic and we struggle to trust in our lifeline of breath, but the deeper I go...the more peace I find. The more I'm me...the longer I can stay, the slower I breath, the more vivid it becomes.



My perspective...different. The cup...not needed. The calm deeper...humbling. As the surface may rage...I choose a world that lives different...and that the place I call home.

Be safe and well friends...it's already a beautiful day. ♡

Facebook post by Kris Munsch

December 16, 2018 at 6:37AM



Autumn

In the fall

When amber leaves are shed,

Softly—silently

Like tears that wait to flow,

I watch and grieve.

My heart beats sadly in the fall;

'Tis then I miss you most of all.

*Lily de Lauder
TCF Van Nuys, CA*

“May we never let the things we can't have or don't have spoil our enjoyment of the things we do have and can have.”-Richard Evans

THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF SIBLING GRIEF

From the shadows we come, the surviving siblings. We are all ages: younger, older, twins and subsequent children. We have our own story to tell, one that is often brushed aside in the concern for our parents, the spouse, and even the children of our sibling. We are grieving, experiencing the same intensity of pain, but not always acknowledged by others. When a child dies, a future is lost; when a parent dies, it is the past which is buried. The death of a sibling is the death of a friend, a rival, an antagonist, a confidant, and perhaps a co-conspirator. It is important to help give siblings a voice as we struggle in the shadows, searching to find light in the darkness.

My mother would tell you that when my brother, Big A died, *“the world went dark and silent. No longer did life seem worth living. The sun grew cold and the music died. There were no happy sounds in our house anymore and the sun cast only shadows of sadness.”* When Austin died, we all thought the sun had left forever. But much to our dismay, the sun kept coming up and we had to keep going, even though we didn't always know where we were going! My mom used to tell people that the only reason she got up after my brother died was because I needed cereal. There is a little more to the story.

It is true, I was hungry. But what she didn't tell you is that at first, she moved the cereal down to a lower cabinet, to make it easier for me to reach. And then she put the milk in a smaller container so I didn't need help pouring it. Then the TV was moved to a shorter shelf so I could turn on my own cartoons. By now, all the possible accommodations had been made for me to be “self-sufficient,” — mind you, I was 4. But every day I came back, needing something else. Finally, my mom, exhausted and looking to grieve in peace, asked me what more could I possibly need?

I told her that I needed my brother back. We cried together while she explained patiently to her 4-year-old daughter for the thousandth time that he could not come back. Then I asked her when our family would be fixed, “unbroken.” I didn't have the words then that I do now, to say that I was hungry for more than cereal. I had lost my brother...and we were at risk of losing so much more...

It was then, in the early hours of a Saturday morning, that we came to realize that in our own unique struggles to find a way to breathe in those early days, we had lost each other. We didn't lose my brother, he died. But we were at risk of losing the support of our little family. This was the spark for us, the start of our commitment to find a way to reach through our differences in our losses to find some common ground.

Our story is not unique. One of the most difficult parts of being a bereaved sibling is the loss of the family we knew. Our parents are consumed by their own grief and while we certainly understand why our experience is that none of our supports are the same. Siblings are the people who have known us and our family the longest. Our friends may not know how to help and may shy away. Extended family is primarily concerned with our parents, and the family that we knew is shattered seemingly beyond repair.

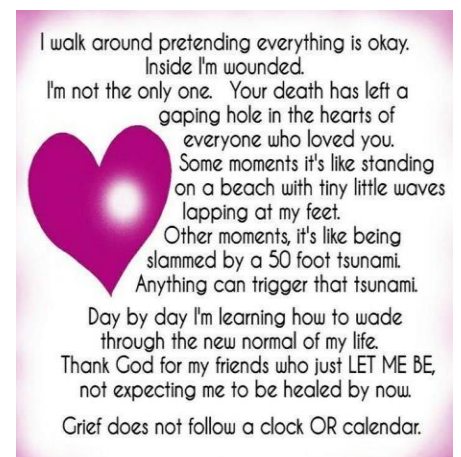
How can you help a bereaved sibling?

Acknowledge that Sibling loss is devastating — often sibs feel we are the “Forgotten Mourners.” We may be asked how their parents are handling the loss. Many times, we feel that our loss is not given as much weight by supportive others. Take the time to ask surviving siblings how we are doing. Encourage us to seek and accept emotional support for ourselves — sometimes we feel driven to support our parents. Many siblings report putting their own grief on hold to care for parents or out of fear that their grieving will make things worse for their grieving parents who “have enough to deal

with.” It can result in siblings feeling isolated and alone within their own families. We may need reminders and permission to grieve and to accept our own support.

Allow us to grapple with our guilt — the truth is that all sibling relationships are not perfect and even great ones come with some not-so-hot moments of rivalry or ugly words. Grief has a unique quality of playing back newsreels of the worst moments between us and our siblings when we are feeling down. Remind us of memories where we were kind to our sibling. Help us put into perspective our normal sibling relationships. It would be weird if every moment we had with them was actually perfect. We may need you to help us to remember this. We are surviving siblings. We face many challenges, sometimes alone. But with support and a lot of grief work, we can emerge from the shadows. We can claim our roles and live the legacies we have chosen of our loved ones with pride (colored with sadness). Am I Still a Sister? You bet I am! And just as my little family learned in the wee hours of a Saturday morning, crying over breakfast cereal, I hope our TCF family can find that we are all bereaved, we are all hurting, we are many things, BUT WE ARE NOT ALONE. Together we can become a family circle, broken by death, but mended by love.

-Allie Simms Franklin, Big A's sister,



Our thoughts always drift to you, whether we are surrounded by other people or alone. The void left behind is sometimes overwhelming. We will never get used to your absence.

Karen Carroll, Frankfort, KY-TCF



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

ANGER

I've been carrying this around with me for over two years now. I mean that both figuratively and literally. I wrote this over two years ago and have been carrying it around in my pocket, written down on a piece of paper. I have also been carrying it around in my very soul as a feeling that I just can't shake. I hope that by passing it off to you, the reader, I can gain some peace.

I was going to rewrite this to make it more presentable as I have learned a lot about writing as the time has passed. I decided to present it in its original form, however, as the blog is about raw emotion felt by a grieving parent. Here then is what I originally wrote as part of a project that gave way to "Pennies from Josh".

ANGER

This probably won't be very popular, but I think there are more than a few parents who have felt this emotion in private, or at least something like it.

When my son was killed in what was classified as a "hit and run" accident, I was naturally angry. I was angry at the person who hit him and kept going. How could you? Angry at the person who left him at the club at which he had performed because of an argument. How could you? Angry at the officials who treated his death as just another death, an inconvenience they didn't have the time to properly investigate. How DARE you?

But something else kept creeping into the back of my mind. It was a feeling I tried to force out. A feeling I refused to consciously entertain for even a moment.

That feeling was anger. Anger at my son. I have denied it for quite a while now, but the truth is that a part

of me is very angry at him for his actions. I feel guilty as hell for feeling this way but I can't help it, it's how I feel.

People say "he's an angel now" but that really doesn't help. How can I possibly be angry with him if he is an "angel" now? I am still angry with him, angel or not. A lot of bad decisions were made that night. My son's bad decision cost him his life. The others involved will live with their decision for the rest of their lives. They may try to minimize their involvement, but they will feel a certain amount of guilt to their last breath. I take no comfort in that, I happen to love one of these people and wish them well.

However, his decision also cost me. It cost me my only son. It cost me any hope of grandchildren. It cost me my best friend, my buddy. It cost me those late-night calls that I looked forward to so much. It cost me the pride of watching my son succeed as an entertainer. It cost me the one person in this world that would love me unconditionally, even though we disagreed on his future.

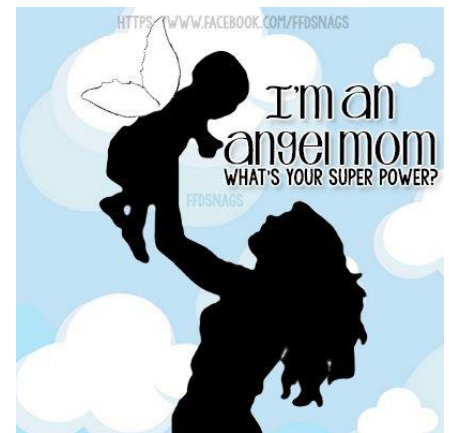
So, your flash of uncontrollable anger cost me the best part of my life. You could have stayed put and gotten a ride safely home. It makes me so mad that, in your anger, you gave no thought as to what devastation your actions would cause your mother and myself. We will never be the same.

But in death, just as in life, that anger fades and softens. Forgiveness returns and the love we feel for you is as strong as ever. I could never stay mad at you.

The end

Those feelings of anger occur less and less often as time goes on, but I know the will return so I brace myself and tell myself that this too shall pass. I pass those feelings off in the form of anger at others and have paid a very heavy price for it in the loss of personal relationships. I hope as time passes that those that I have unfairly targeted will realize that I meant no harm and find it in their hearts to forgive me. We shall see.

*Author Gregory Polluck
Father of Joshua Polluck*



LOVE GIFTS:

A special thank you to Lynn Talley for a donation 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>

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.